

Photo by Scott H. Shook

Thomas Lockyear, museum manager, entertains his audience during his Third Thursday Talk Series.

doing something else with this property. Jim Coletta, former commissioner, envisioned the Everglades airport property being transformed into a boat launching facility, so people can take advantage of the waterfront property. I'm like, what year is this? Because a lot of this sounds very familiar to me."

Lockyear said the residents of Everglades City united against the plan.

"The local people said, don't sell our airport. A strong message to the county. The city will fight. Mayor Sammy Hamilton says there's no bargaining. This thing's not going anywhere. And the commission says, all right, all right. Keep your airport for now. Commissioners nix the sale after local input. So, it's supposed to work, right? But then Mayor Sammy decides that he doesn't just want to keep the airport, he wants Everglades City to own it. The FAA wants Everglades to prove that they not only have the money to buy the airport, but the to sustain it. People in the government at the time didn't think they had to show anybody anything. So, it was fine for a minute and then it just kind of caught on fire again. And this continues on through 2005. Eventually, the fire goes out, but the airport keeps existing as it does. But now we find ourselves in a similar situation today."

Lockyear sees history repeating itself.

"You know, it's been operating since the 40s and people are talking about closing it," Lockyear said. "The local citizens are getting together. They're signing petitions and they're expressing how they feel about it. And I'm going to clarify at this point, I'm not trying to advocate for anything on one side or another. This is a history lesson. It's not the first time that these arguments have been made. Part of the reason that they're saying that it doesn't make any money is because it can't. Other airports make tremendous revenue by renting their hangars, but these hangars were damaged by multiple hurricanes and were never re-

paired. I ask questions like, where's the FEMA money? Did nobody put in for it? It doesn't appear that anybody made the claim. It's not just the hangers. One of the biggest problems is you can't find fuel there. They have it, but the card reader won't work. Sometimes it's connectivity, sometimes it's the mechanical device. A local citizen was telling me that they won't get the guy to come and fix it. It's very challenging. It makes you wonder if somebody just doesn't want to do it. I was talking to somebody who said the guy that runs the Naples airport says, we sell more fuel than we can shake a stick at. There are lots of different solutions. It's not my job to theorize about what works, what doesn't. I think it's really cool that there are a group of people in town here that are asking to get some questions answered. What do we do to make enough money in order to make it worthwhile to keep it going? And that doesn't even start to address the emergency services aspect of it. Do you really want to get rid of an airport in a place that's as prone to natural disasters as this one? It kind of freaks me out. If we could just go back in time a little bit and think about this place. As you know, the sportsman's paradise that Barron Collier imagined is still a world-class destination. You can't shoot bears and panthers and alligators like you could back then and have one-stop shopping for the taxidermy for your man cave. But there's still lots of really cool stuff to do. And it's the best fishing in the world right here. Part of the economy here is dependent on that airport because people are flying into that airport to go fishing. And I know because they stop in this museum. I see them all the time. We have groups of people coming in and out of there. It's not my job to tell you that there were almost 4000 flights in and out of Everglades last year. It's not a huge amount, but it's pretty good for a place where you can't even get gas."

Save a Sea Turtle

Fill in Holes on Beach



Photo by Jeanene Jewett

Taken on Easter Sunday, this hole was on Sand Dollar near the dunes where sea turtles typically nest. Sea turtle monitor Kyra Schmid is standing in the hole.

By Maria Lamb

From May 1st to October 31st, female loggerhead sea turtles are heading to their favorite nesting spots on the sandy beaches of Marco Island, looking for that soft sand to deposit their eggs. So, any evening now, we will have female loggerheads coming ashore to do what they've done for the last 100 million years! And yes, in Florida we all share our beaches as a nesting habitat for the loggerhead sea turtle.

Nesting loggerheads face many manmade threats and lately, reports of large and deep holes or pits have been observed on our beach from South Beach to Sand Dollar Island. These holes pose a risk to nesting sea turtles as

well as hatchlings. So, while we all enjoy a day at the beach building sandcastles and digging holes, let's all make sure to fill in these holes and knock down the sandcastles when it is time to leave the beach.

With their heavy shells and paddle-like flippers, nesting loggerheads haul themselves very slowly across a sandy beach looking for a suitable nesting site. And according to experts, nesting sea turtles have been known to accidentally plunge into these deep pits, causing irreparable harm.

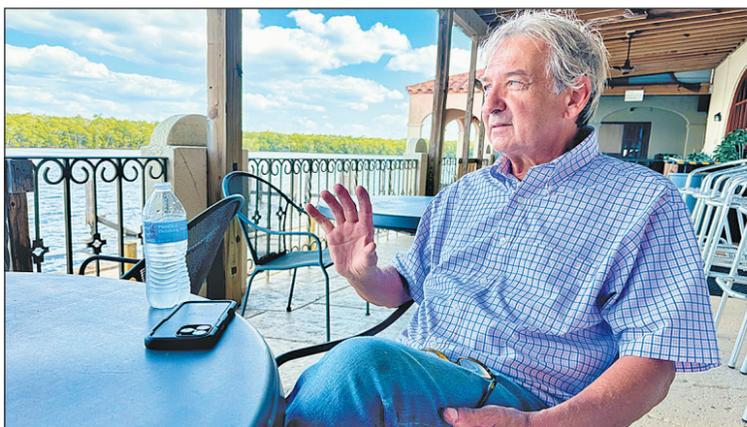
For the safety of nesting sea turtles, filling in holes and knocking down sandcastles is vital for sea turtles' survival. Only 1 in 1,000 baby sea turtles make it to adulthood.

Sea Turtle Activity Update April 15 - 21, 2025

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parkshore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of Naples	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keewaydin Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marco Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687

Signs from A/14



Bill Odrey on the deck at the old train depot. "You hear nothing except the waves and birds across the protected Everglades," he said. "There's no other place in Everglades City you can do this."

Guard use it to save the city. And it was never taken care of before I got it. I came into town because I loved it. I'm saving a piece of Florida."

Sitting on the deck of the Depot, overlooking an idyllic scene of emerald water, pelicans, and mangroves, Odrey muses about the irony of his situation.

"You hear nothing except the waves and birds across the protected Everglades," he said. "There's no other place in Everglades City you can do this."

So, what keeps Odrey going? What keeps him from giving up?

"I gave everything to Jesus,"

he said flatly. "I did give up, and I was going to sell it for condos, and I prayed about it. Then a pastor and a priest said, 'Did you let God do it? And I said no. And then I said, I'll do it. And I did it. And then everything worked. Owens Corning came in. So did Carlisle SynTec Systems, Sherwin-Williams, Oldcastle railings, Rams Construction, and Total Construction and Supply. That's what happened. I put it in His hands, and then it happened. So, I know it's supposed to happen."

Odrey estimates that he's had over \$400,000 in materials

donated to his effort to save the Depot. He estimates he operated the Depot as a restaurant and tiki bar for a year and a half or two years before hurricane damage led to its being shut down. With his savings dwindling, he's pinning his hopes on someone loaning him money to hire workers to install the materials that he's acquired.

"We need a loan," Odrey said, "to get the materials put on. When you talk to different banks, it's considered a non-performing asset because we're not open."