

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: April 22 Through May 1, 2021

By Gary Mooney

thewritestuff25@gmail.com

Celebrate Earth Day Week with a trip to the Fort Myers Beach environmental and historic treasure that is the Mound House! Of primary importance are the two new programs the Mound House hosts on Earth Day, Thursday, April 22: the free “Earth Day Beach Walk & Clean Up” for all ages at 9 a.m., and the free “Earth Day Clean Up: BYOK!” for all ages at 1 p.m. Advance registration is necessary for both events.

In addition to the two new Earth Days programs, the Mound House continues three new innovative outings: the “Advance Kayak Tour,” “Beginner Kayak Tour,” and “Fishing Rancho Outside Guided Tour,” as well as five other unique kayak tours. The always-popular “Full Moon Rising Kayak Tour” is Tuesday, April 27, and the Mound House hosts its signature event, the “Shell Mound Outside Guided Tour,” on nine occasions.

One of Southwest Florida’s most iconic historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots back to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural & environmental learning center that offers numerous educational programs each month, including for children, with Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Social Distancing precautions and all visitors wearing masks. The Mound House is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 ages 13 & up, \$8 students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For information, reservations, and monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

NEW & FREE: “Earth Day Beach Walk & Clean Up”

For all ages on Thursday, April 22, at 9 a.m.

Join us at the Bay Oaks Recreational Center at 2731 Oak Street, just down from the Fort Myers Beach Public Library, to take action on Earth Day to keep Fort Myers Beach clean! Mound House Staff leads a Beach Walk Clean Up while providing an educational lesson about the wildlife and plants that make FMB a unique environment. The program begins at Beach Access #25, with free parking at Bay Oaks. Advance registration necessary at www.moundhouse.org, with the Mound House providing gloves and buckets and all participants wearing masks.

NEW & FREE: “Earth Day Clean Up: BYOK!”

For all ages on Thursday, April 22, at 1 p.m.

For the Mound House on Earth Day, it is “BYOK” – “Bring Your Own Kayak!” Departing from the Mound House launch, small groups of kayakers cut monofilament lines from mangroves and clean up litter while exploring Matanzas Pass and Hell Peckney Bay in this free event. Registration necessary at www.moundhouse.org, with a limited number of kayaks available or bring your own. The Mound House provides gloves, buckets, and scissors; all participants wear masks on land and life jackets on water.

FREE “Newton Beach Park Guided Beach Walk”

For all ages every Tuesday and Thursday weather permitting at 9 a.m.

This twice-weekly free outdoor nature program is different every single time, as the “Guided Beach Walks” have a simple premise – the groups walk roughly a half-mile down the beach and back, discussing whatever you find that particular morning. Meet at the thatched hut closest to the beach, with CDC and Social Distancing in place and face masks mandatory. Bring sunscreen, shoes to get wet, sunglasses, and hat. No reservations necessary; while free, parking is \$3-per-hour, with one hour generally enough. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

“Family Outside Adventures”

For adults & children age 6 & older weather permitting on Thursday, April 22; Saturday, April 24; Tuesday, April 27; and Thursday, April 29, all at 10 a.m.

Explore everything fun at the Mound House on this outdoor activity, as the Interpretive Staff leads families through entertaining and educational experiences you will remember for a lifetime! All participants wear masks with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place. \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

“Shell Mound” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, April 22, at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Saturday, April 24 at 11 a.m.; Tuesday, April 27 & Thursday, April 29, at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.; and Saturday, May 1, at 10 & 11 a.m.

If you dig archaeology, the Mound House’s signature program is for you! Tour the 2,000-year-old Calusa Indian Shell Mound led by the Interpretive Staff as you explore the site’s archaeology to unearth clues about this ancient society. All participants over 6 must wear a mask. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, April 23; Saturday, April 24; and Friday, April 30, all at 9 a.m.

Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden waters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve as only a kayaker can on this Environmental Educator-guided tour of the ancient realm of the Calusa! Witness birds, fish, manatee and dolphins as you paddle through the natural beauty of Estero and Hell Peckney Bays in a tandem kayak. All paddling & safety equipment provided, with kayak tours in accordance with Florida Society of Ethical Ecotourism guidelines. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15. Advance reservations necessary; private tours available. CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place and all participants wears masks on land.

“Sunset Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, April 23, at 6 p.m.

People travel from all over the nation and world to marvel at Fort Myers Beach sunsets, but not many get to do so by kayak! Explore the tidal creeks and winding mangrove tunnels that extend into the hidden backwaters of Estero Bay while experiencing the estuary’s abundant wildlife in the quiet of twilight in accordance with the Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism guidelines. The Mound House provides all paddling and safety equipment, with CDC and Social Distancing in place; all participants wear masks on land. \$45-per-person; Mound House Members \$15, with advance reservations necessary and private tours available.

NEW “Fishing Rancho Outside Guided Tour”

For all ages on Saturday, April 24, at 2 p.m.

Perfect for Florida history buffs! Learn about the Latino fishing village known as a “Rancho” that existed on the shell mound between the ancient Calusa and Anglo-Pioneer eras. Explore the site’s archaeology and history through unearthed clues about this multicultural society. All participants over 6 must wear masks and everyone will observe CDC guidelines. Advance registration necessary, with a \$5-per-person fee that does not include Mound House admission.

“Full Moon Rising Kayak Tour”

Tuesday, April 27, at 6:30 p.m.

The unique tour offers kayakers the rare opportunity to experience the backwaters of the Estero Bay in the quiet of twilight by the light of the full moon! Explore the estuary’s tidal creeks, winding mangroves, and abundant wildlife illuminated by the full moon. Weather permitting and advance reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org; \$45-per-person with Mound House members \$15. The Mound House provides all paddling

equipment, with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place, and everyone wearing a mask on land.

NEW “Advanced Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Wednesday, April 28, at 9 a.m.

For kayakers who want a new 3-hour challenge of exploring areas of the Estero Bay where few get to venture, including the Hell Peckney Bay’s mangrove isles! \$55-per-person; Mound House members \$25 that includes all paddling & safety equipment. Advance reservations necessary, with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place and all participants wearing masks on land.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Wednesday, April 28, at 1 p.m.

Fun for the whole family on a specially-designed Environmental Educator-guided kayak tour! See birds, dolphins, manatee, and other wildlife while paddling through the Estero Bay mangroves. Your family must have children between the ages of 6 to 11 to qualify, with advance registration necessary. \$25-per-person age 13 & up; \$15-per-person ages 6 to 12. The Mound House provides all equipment, with CDC and Social Distancing in place; all participants wear masks on land.

NEW “Beginner Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, April 30, at 9 a.m.

For newbies who want to kayak at their own pace! Participants on this 2-hour scenic and informative tour learn kayaking basics while marveling at the unique Estero Bay and Matanzas Pass environments. \$45-per-person, with Mound House members \$15 that includes paddling equipment and instruction. Advance reservations necessary with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place and all kayakers wearing masks on land.