

**Mound House Outdoor Nature & Education Events:
Thursday, January 6, Through Saturday, January 15, 2022**

By Gary Mooney
thewritestuff25@gmail.com

Kick off 2022 with a trip to the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach! One of Southwest Florida's most-beloved historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. The oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Mound House is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This week debuts the 2022 Mound House Lecture Series with Dr. Uzi Baram presenting "Archaeology of the Network to Freedom on Florida's Gulf Coast" on Tuesday, January 11, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Dr. Baram, a Professor of Anthropology and Director of the New College Public Archaeology Laboratory at the New College of Florida, offers the results from the January 2020 Manatee Mineral Spring excavation that revealed the multifaceted daily lives of the Maroons, the self-emancipated Florida Gulf Coast peoples of African heritage and free Blacks from the Apalachicola, Suwannee Manatee River areas from the 1770s through 1821. This legacy of Spanish La Florida was a haven of freedom as the southern route of the Underground Railroad.

The program begins with a 30-minute outdoor reception at 5:30 p.m. followed by the indoor lecture at 6 p.m. Due to the limited indoor space, the Mound House requires advance reservations at 239-765-0865, with masks necessary; \$12-per-person with Mound House members \$7-per-person.

The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning center that offers numerous monthly educational programs, including for kids. The Mound House is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Fort Myers Beach residents receiving a 50% museum admission discount. It enforces Social Distancing guidelines and recommends that all unvaccinated visitors wear masks. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

Shell Mound Tour

For all ages every January Tuesday through Saturday at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

If you dig archaeology, the Mound House's signature program is for you! Tour the one-of-a-kind underground 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. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

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 – walk roughly a half-mile down the beach and back, discussing whatever you find that morning. Meet at the thatched hut closest to the beach, with Social Distancing in place. Bring sunscreen, shoes to get wet, sunglasses, and hat. No reservations necessary; while free, parking is \$5-per-hour, with one hour generally enough. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

Cool Calusa Tools

For families with children ages 6 & older every January Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday at 10 a.m.; no program on Tuesday, January 25.

Learn to hunt, fish, and make masks and pottery, just like the Calusa! The Mound House interpretive staff leads this exciting hands-on tour of the Mound House grounds where they demonstrate Calusa tools and artifacts, then help you make Calusa-inspired artwork where your imagination runs wild! \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

Garden Tour

For all ages every January Tuesday & Friday at 2 p.m.

Stroll through the Mound House gardens to discover how its unique plants conserve water and protect wildlife, while learning how the Calusa and other Native Americans used them in their daily lives. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

Archaeology: Can You Dig It?

For all ages every January Wednesday & Friday at 10 a.m. No program on Wednesday, January 26.

Learn what it takes to be an archaeologist! Handle real artifacts and discover how archaeologists study past cultures in a program perfect for families. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Mound House members free.

Untold Stories Tour

For adults every January Thursday at 2 p.m.

The Mound House is the oldest standing structure on Fort Myers Beach, with an intriguing cast of characters who called it home, ranging from farmers to casino owners; scientists to developers! Learn about their individual stories along with a good dose of

island history on this guided tour through the Mound House Museum, native gardens, and majestic grounds. Adults \$15; Mound House members free.

Sunset Kayak Tour

Ages 12 & up weather permitting on Fridays, January 7 & 14, at 4 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! In addition to catching a breathtaking sunset, 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. The Mound House provides all paddling and safety equipment, with Social Distancing in place on land. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15, with advance registrations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Family Fun Kayak Tour

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Saturdays, January 8 & 15, at 2 p.m.

This specially-designed Environmental Educator-guided kayak tour is perfect fun for families with children ages 6 & up! See birds, dolphins, manatee, and other wildlife while paddling through the Estero Bay mangroves. \$25-per-person ages 13 & up; \$15-per-person ages 6 to 12 that includes Mound House admission. The Mound House provides all padding equipment, with Social Distancing in place on land. Advance registrations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Mound House Lecture Series

“The Archaeology of the Network to Freedom on Florida’s Gulf Coast”

For adults on Tuesday, January 11, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Dr. Uzi Baram from New College of Florida presents the January 2020 Manatee Mineral Spring excavation results that reveal the multifaceted daily lives of the Maroons, the self-emancipated Florida Gulf Coast peoples of African heritage and free Blacks from the Apalachicola, Suwannee and Manatee River areas from the 1770s through 1821. Outdoor reception at 5:30 p.m. followed by the indoor lecture at 6 p.m. Due to the indoor space limitations, the Mound House requires advance reservations at 239-765-0865 with masks necessary; \$12-per-person with Mound House members \$7-per-person.

Latino History Tour

For all ages on Wednesday, January 12, 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. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.