

About 300 words. Herb Hiller, hiller@funport.net, 386/467-8223. Earliest release.

Once-a-year St. Johns River study-and-mingle program returns March to Blue Spring State Park

Science, sport, lore, art, adventure, public policy and more about the St. Johns River all get their due at the third annual River Classroom sponsored March 9-12 by the not-for-profit St. Johns River Alliance together with Stetson University and the University of North Florida Environmental Center.

The event takes place at Blue Spring State Park in Orange City. Registrants pay \$295 for three overnights in park cabins or from \$60 to \$100 as day visitors. Registration fees remain unchanged from last year.

River authorities who will again take part include author-filmmaker Bill Belleville and acclaimed wildlife photographer John Moran. They will again offer popular how-to programs in nature journaling and picture taking.

Also likely to rank highly again will be convivial social hours and catered lunches and dinners also included in full registrations.

Programs mix lectures and discussions, films, river touring, manatee observation and story telling. Registrants tour by boat to Hontoon Island State Park. Michelle Thatcher will present her much praised film "Alligator Princess of America's Nile" about her solo source-to-mouth adventure on the river. Singer-songwriter Magda Hiller will again perform songs of the region.

"Bill, John and Michelle are brilliant. Fishing guide Bill Flowers and historian Bill Dreggors are legendary. We convene early enough in March that manatees will gather plentifully in the spring run while skeeters should be hardly a bother at all," says river classroom program director Herb Hiller.

Others Hiller also expects for the program include the return of St. Johns Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon and Stetson University biologist Dr. Kirsten Work.

Registration forms appear at www.stjohnsriveralliance.com. The park's six two-bedroom cabins each accommodate up to four and are available first come first served. Registrants use cabin kitchens to make their own breakfasts.

For further information, contact Hiller at hiller@funport.net, 386/467-8223.