

AT YOUR LEISURE

Great Calusa Blueway adds event to fall festivities

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Banner Correspondent

The Great Calusa Blueway winds and weaves its 190 mile course through some of Lee County's most beautiful waterways. It's named for the Calusa Indians of South Florida who dwelled here for centuries before the Spaniards arrived in the early 1500's.

The Blueway lends itself to paddling trips that can last a few hours or even a few days and include overnight camping. It's popular with anglers, bird watchers, nature photographers and history buffs.

"Lee County has gorgeous beaches and great restaurants and shopping, but the Blueway takes visitors to the underbelly of the estuary," said Lee County Parks and Recreation Waterways Coordinator Betsy Clayton. Clayton helps maintain the Blueway including trail markers, website and maps and organizing festivals and tournaments.

Great Calusa Blueway officials are gearing up for events slated to take place this fall and other ongoing festivities. Blueway or Bust, the premier paddling festival that attracts avid canoeing and kayaking enthusiasts will take place Oct. 29 through Nov. 7 during the fifth-annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival along the Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Florida.

The festival's two weekends will offer hands-on nature experiences along with kayaking and canoeing, speakers and instruction, eco-activities for the whole family, races, fishing tournament, geocaching and green events.

This year Blueway or Bust organizers have added an event at Lovers Key State Park that will encompass an entire day of stand-up paddle boarding, coastal kayaking classes and demonstrations, canoeing, paddling gear for purchase, guided off-road cycling, bird watching, educational wading trips and living history programs. The festival will also feature live music and lots of time to relax and socialize with fellow paddlers.

Admission to most of the day's events is free with purchase of a park pass. Sea Kayaker Magazine and the Florida Paddling Trails Association have signed on to support the festival.

Outfitters are especially excited about this year's annual



These kayakers are ready to hit the Great Calusa Blueway.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MERRITT



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Deep in a canopy along the Great Calusa Blueway.

Calusa Blueway Kayak Fishing Tournament which will allow anglers to compete for cash and prizes.

According to Justin Stuller of Estero River Outfitters, kayak fishing has seen a steady increase in popularity. Stuller expects this year's tournament to be significant. The stealth advantage of fishing from a kayak stacks the odds of catching fish in favor of the anglers.

"It's great to fish the Blueway from a kayak because you can sneak right up on fish like snook, redfish trout and tarpon," said Stuller, who says there's no experience necessary to learn to kayak. "Kayaking is great for all skill levels."

Stuller, who provides canoe and kayak rentals on- and off-site, says kayaking, has fast

■ see **Calusa** on 5B



PHOTO BY KEVIN MERRITT

Paddling the Estero phase of the Blueway.

IF YOU GO

■ **What:** Play, "Searching for Eden: The Diaries of Adam and Eve" – The play examines relationships through the eyes of the world's first couple.

■ **Where:** Theatre Conspiracy, 10091 McGregor Boulevard, Fort Myers, www.theatreconspiracy.org

■ **Age limit:** All ages

■ **When:** 8 p.m. Aug. 26-28, Sept. 2-4 ; one 2 p.m. matinee on Aug. 29

■ **Information:** 239-936-3239 or theatreconspiracy.org

Review: Theatre Conspiracy finds what makes couples tick in 'Searching for Eden'

By Chris Silk
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FORT MYERS — Adam and Eve exist as mankind's oldest couple – but what really happened underneath those fig leaves? Theatre Conspiracy gets Biblical and finds a sobering, thoughtful relationship dramedy with "Searching For Eden: The Diaries of Adam and Eve."

Playwright James Still based the work in part on Mark Twain's short story collection "The Diaries of Adam and Eve." The first act features the first couple frolicking in the Garden of Eden, assigning names to random flowers, stars, plants, animals and even to each other. Wait for Jenny Smith (Eve) and her hilarious attempt to name the moon. A more serious second act sees the pair back in the garden (now a trendy "E Resort") in modern times as busy yuppies escaping for a weekend.

The show is light, humorous and packed to the gills with tropes about the never-

ending battle of the sexes. The first time Eve sees Adam (Bill Taylor), she asks herself "Maybe he's a monkey? He's not smart enough to be a monkey." Meanwhile, Taylor puts his wicked comic timing to work throughout the show as poor Adam drops variations of "She follows me everywhere. She never shuts up. Why won't she leave me alone." at exactly the right spots.

With only two cast members – neither of whom is alone on stage for more than a few moments – movement and action become key – as well as to never let the show become a verbal ping pong match. Taylor, Theatre Conspiracy's founder and artistic director and Smith gambol about the set like kids on a playground – scampering up an improvised tree, hiding behind bushes or dipping into a pool.

The actors eschew the traditional leaves for more comfortable and less revealing shorts and pullovers – and bring a depth

to the lines while they're scampering barefoot around the stage, throwing rocks, riding a brontosaur (an extended joke) and peeling bananas. Every woman in the audience gets a grin on her face when bubbly Eve plants a gentle kiss on bumbling Adam only to see him ask excitedly, "What's that?" A knowing smile spreads across Smith's face. She is woman, hear her roar. Cue the tigers.

Director Jamie Carmichael makes a deliberate attempt to pull the show back from a slapsticky edge – especially in the first act that's drawn mostly from Twain's more light-hearted work. There is silliness, yes, but at every turn "Eden" speaks to the heart of what relationships are about. Do men listen? Do women listen? Does anyone ever turn of the cell phones (there's a Verizon joke), shut up and communicate?

A colorful set painted with flowers, grass and bushes evokes (at least to me)

a vague feeling of the spiky trees and background art in "Where the Wild Things Are," probably an unintended connection. Snappy music cues, lighting effects and a snake on a rope, plus delicious rock songs during the pre-show and intermission help the mood, especially as the show aims for a serious exploration of relationships instead of going straight for cheap laughs.

"Searching for Eden" pokes at the prickly stereotypes of being paired as it rotates history's oldest duet through two hours of couples counseling. Grab a map – you never know what you'll find when you go "Searching for Eden."

Never listen to snakes. E-mail me, csilk@naplesnews.com. E-mail me, csilk@naplesnews.com, find me on Twitter at @napleschris or read my Stage Door theater blog. You can sign up to receive the Stage Door blog via email.

