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Boating Adventures at the Environmental Learning Center

Wabasso Island, FL – Exciting, beautiful, educational, and fun are words used by participants to describe their boating experience after their excursions on the Indian River Lagoon and St. Sebastian River with the Environmental Learning Center (ELC). The Indian River Lagoon and its tributaries have one of the most diverse environments in North America. In addition to seeing wonderful scenery, including multiple bird species, fish rising to the water surface, and various kinds of native vegetation, many lucky boaters spot dolphins, manatees, and alligators in their natural habitat. Boating is the best way to explore this environment in a close-up way.

The ELC provides several alternatives for boaters, including pontoon boat, canoe, and kayak tours. People are urged to pick those that best meet their capabilities and interests.

Two pontoon boat excursions are offered. Naturalist guides provide commentary to enhance the experience on both trips. One sails from the ELC on Wabasso Island into the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Separate morning and afternoon trips give participants the opportunity to see the bird species that nest, rest, and feed there at close range. Target species include brown and white pelicans, egret, ibis, kingfishers, and herons. Migrating birds gather on nearby mangrove islands where manatees and dolphins may be seen as you motor past. The fee for this excursion is \$22 per adult and \$10 per child (\$2 less for members and their children)

A second excursion explores the St. Sebastian River providing a glimpse of one of the few remaining undeveloped coastal rivers in Florida. Sightings during this jungle-like adventure may include alligators, manatees, ospreys and eagles. The fee for this trip is \$26 per adult and \$14 for children (\$2 less for members and their children).

Canoe excursions, lead by knowledgeable guides, explore “off the beaten path” canoe trails where water birds and mangrove tree crabs abound. Sometimes dolphins and manatees are seen close by the canoe. The fee, including canoe rental and gear, is \$15 per adult and \$7 per child (\$3 less for members and their children).

Two kayaking excursions are offered by the ELC for both experienced kayakers and beginners. Instruction is included for beginning paddlers. One trip explores the shallow waters around the ELC's Wabasso Island campus to see beautiful views of the Indian River Lagoon not accessible from motor boats. The cost, including kayak rental and gear is only \$20 per person (\$15 per member). Another trip explores Pelican Island, the nation's first wildlife refuge. There is no better way to see the variety of birds that congregate on the island. The cost is \$30 per adult and \$25 per child (\$2 less for members and their children).

The schedule of the various boating excursions is available on The ELC's web site, www.DiscoverELC.org . Reservations, as well as schedule and information inquiries, may be made by calling the ELC at (772)589-5050.

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