



Spanning the Gap

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"Visiting Treasures"

Clyde & Nikki Butcher

by Superintendent John J. Donahue

For the last few issues we have been highlighting local icons who have been identified as "living treasures," but this issue we have a rare opportunity to highlight a couple who inhabit a different ecosystem than our own.

Clyde and Nikki Butcher have been partners in life for over forty years and together they operate one of the most successful photography studios in the nation. I am not measuring their success by the number of dollars they generate, but by the amount of great art they have assembled throughout the years. If you have only seen one image of the Everglades in your life, it is very likely to be one of Clyde's great large format photographs.



*Shelf fungi and hay-scented ferns
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
(Color photograph by Clyde and Nikki Butcher 2006)*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

..... INSIDE

About the Recreation Area ... PAGE 2
Sites and Schedules ... PAGE 3
Planning Your Visit... PAGE 3

Park Partners ... PAGE 4
Park Events ... PAGE 4
Park News ... PAGE 5

Recreation and Safety ... PAGES 6 & 7
Employee Spotlight ... PAGE 8

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Clyde & Nikki Butcher

This summer they have spent weeks traveling through and documenting the woods, the streams, the river and the waterfalls of Delaware Water Gap NRA. (DEWA)

It has been a hectic spring for them. They recently completed a book, album and video project about the Apalachicola section of Florida. They opened a studio in Epcot for Disney and they are developing a photographic exhibition for Colonial

Williamsburg about the Northeastern United States. DEWA will be heavily featured in that exhibit celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Jamestown.

Clyde and Nikki live deep in the heart of the Big Cypress Swamp in Florida. Their home is surrounded by sloughs and alligators with an occasional Florida panther (the most endangered mammal in North America). It is one of the most primordial places on earth and leaves

you feeling like you have visited the beginning of life on this planet. There in the niche they have created for themselves they spend all of their days enjoying their first love the natural world. They always use their talents to protect and preserve nature by sharing their images with organizations with the same goals.

(Below) Clyde at work in the Water Gap with his large-format camera. (Color photograph by Nikki Butcher)

Founders of the *Friends of Big Cypress National Preserve*, they are no strangers to the National Park Service. While living amongst the United States and two Indian Tribes, they have found ways to befriend every hunter, off road vehicle user, canoeist and tourist who comes their way. Big Cypress is the proverbial Florida Swamp that you have always heard about people buying by mistake. For Clyde and Nikki it is heaven on earth and there was no mistake in the purchase of their homestead.

So if you happen to see these visiting treasures from the great swamp down south, stop and pick up some hints on what makes a great photograph. Clyde seems happy to share his almost psychic eye for great pictures with anyone who is interested. All of us here at DEWA are happy to share the greatest unit of the national park system with them and everyone who enjoys their work in the future. ■

For more about Big Cypress National Preserve, visit www.nps.gov/bicy

