



Red Mangrove

Keeping Sarasota Bay Healthy Protecting Mangroves

YESTERDAY IN CORTEZ



Wyman Coarsey, Cortez Post Office 1985. Courtesy of Manatee County Public Library Historic Photos Collection

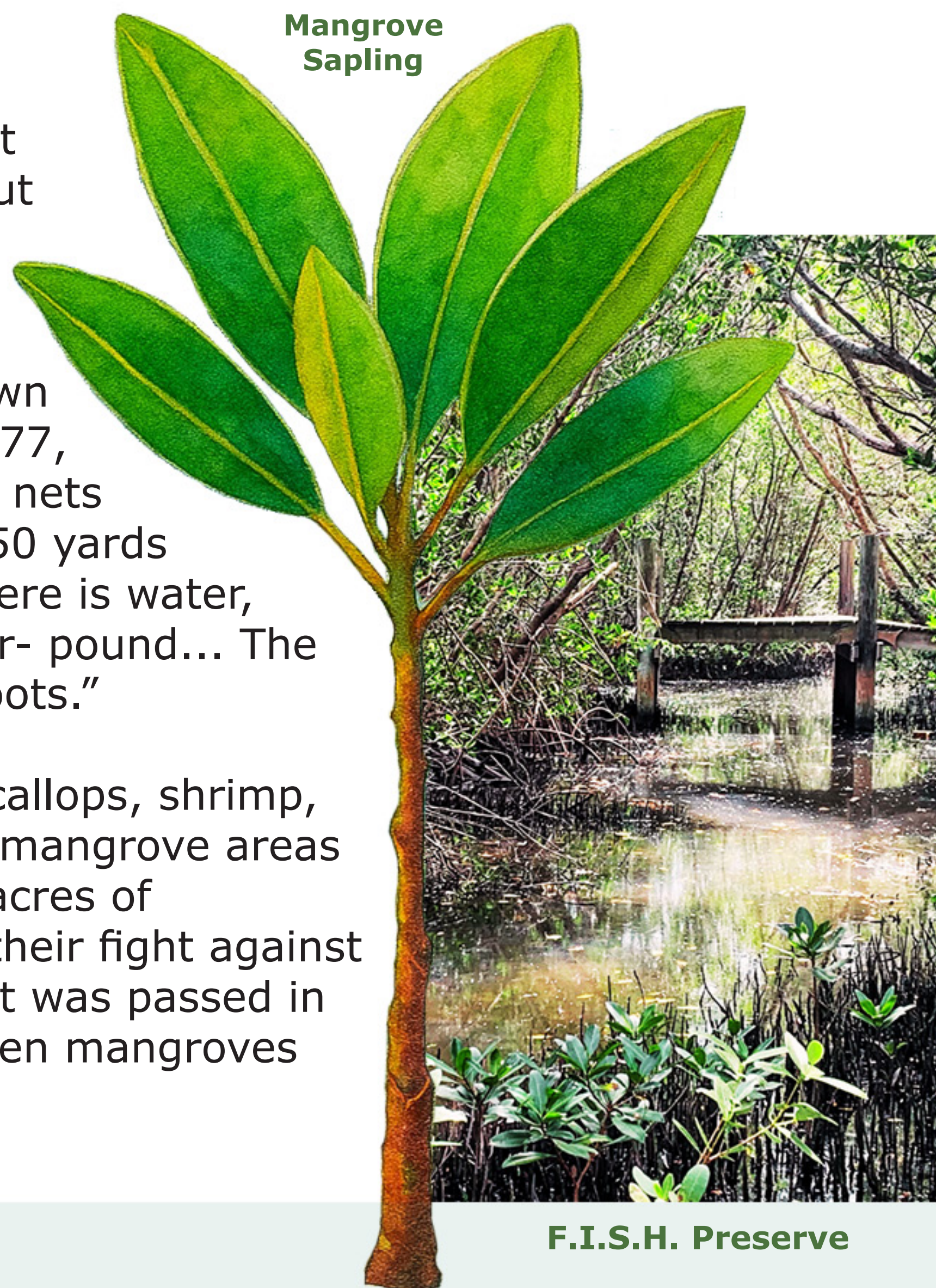
Ask a village old timer about root bumping, and you will learn about both mangroves and sea life. As lifelong Cortezian Wyman Coarsey (1924-2015), commercial fisherman turned town postmaster explained back in 1977, fishermen used to fish with their nets "right up on the bushes.... Go 150 yards up into the swamp. Wherever there is water, you'll find mullet, three- and four- pound... The mullet feeds on the mangrove roots."

Many important species, including mullet, crabs, clams, oysters, scallops, shrimp, snook, red snapper, tarpon, and dozens of bird species depend on mangrove areas for food, nesting, and protection. Sadly, humans destroyed many acres of mangroves in the 1900s, during the coastal building boom and in their fight against mosquitoes. Although the Mangrove Trimming and Preservation Act was passed in 1996, residential and commercial development continues to threaten mangroves up and down the Florida Gulf coast.

TODAY IN CORTEZ

Mangroves are an essential part of the Cortez fishery, serving as a spawning ground for most of the commercially important seafood species. Mangroves are able to reproduce and spread, but only when they have enough space and a healthy environment. Threats, including aggressive coastal development and increasing number of strong hurricanes have hampered many mangroves' ability to thrive. The loss of mangrove habitat harms sea life and makes our coastal communities more vulnerable to storm surge and erosion. Mangrove trees slow down storms and help keep the shoreline in place, protecting waterfront homes and businesses. Efforts today focus on recreating the healthy, balanced, environments in which mangroves naturally thrive. Historic Cortez is at the forefront of mangrove preservation, having purchased 100 acres of sensitive mangrove forest adjacent to the village and bay more than 20 years ago. The FISH Preserve at the east of the village protects the fishery and ensures that all can enjoy this natural habitat into the future.

Keeping Sarasota Bay Healthy signs are a Cortez Village Historical Society project, funded with a grant from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program with additional support from the Florida Maritime Museum. 2024. F.I.S.H. Preserve photo courtesy of Friends of the Florida Maritime Museum.



F.I.S.H. Preserve

**FOR A BETTER TOMORROW...
What you can do to keep
Sarasota Bay healthy**



Practice responsible landscape management. Replace pavement with porosity: stones and shells permit rainwater reabsorption. Reduce runoff of fertilizers, chemicals, and waste. These can overtax the coastal wetlands' vital role in filtering water entering our Bay.



Be a safe boater. No discharges (fuel, chemicals, waste), avoid anchoring and running through shallow seagrass beds.



Protect mangroves and seagrass by reducing runoff and supporting natural habitats like the FISH Preserve.



Improve wastewater treatment. Make sure public officials understand the importance of upgrading wastewater treatment facilities to accommodate population growth.



Visit the FISH Preserve and other Florida wildlife areas on foot or by paddling to see nature in action and to learn more about these critical environments.



Educate others. Follow the QR code to read up on how to keep Sarasota Bay healthy, and share what you have learned about the important work of coastal wetlands preservation.

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