



1

00:00:05,600 --> 00:00:11,700

PAUL MARION/FORMER RESIDENT: Now this is a remarkable place to me, because you have,

2

00:00:11,700 --> 00:00:14,980

on one side over here, modern science.

3

00:00:14,980 --> 00:00:17,320

This is the new world.

4

00:00:17,320 --> 00:00:24,620

That is primitive, the way it was thousands of years ago.

5

00:00:24,620 --> 00:00:26,090

This has not been touched.

6

00:00:26,090 --> 00:00:29,740

BILL NELSON/U.S. SENATOR, FLORIDA: Well, indeed, it is Old Florida.

7

00:00:29,740 --> 00:00:31,560

And it's Old Florida preserved,

8

00:00:31,560 --> 00:00:36,400

which is unique.

9

00:00:36,400 --> 00:00:37,400

It's an exceptional place.

10

00:00:37,400 --> 00:00:40,539

BOB CABANA/DIRECTOR, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER:

It is just awesome to be able to come over

11

00:00:40,539 --> 00:00:41,539

the

12

00:00:41,539 --> 00:00:46,010

bridge at sunrise onto Merritt Island and  
into this refuge.

13

00:00:46,010 --> 00:00:48,749

And the greenery, the flora and fauna,

14

00:00:48,749 --> 00:00:52,230

the wildlife, it's just -- it's spectacular.

15

00:00:52,230 --> 00:00:59,100

NARRATOR: On a narrow stretch of barrier island,  
along Florida's eastern shore, is an oasis.

16

00:00:59,100 --> 00:01:04,379

Here at the Merritt Island National Wildlife  
Refuge, marshes and scrub land are broken

17

00:01:04,379 --> 00:01:05,940

only by towering

18

00:01:05,940 --> 00:01:10,490

launch structures, and birds share the skies  
with rockets.

19

00:01:10,490 --> 00:01:18,009

NASA LAUNCH COMMENTATOR: Three, two, one,  
and liftoff of the Atlas V.

20

00:01:18,009 --> 00:01:22,820

NARRATOR: Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to  
the east and the Indian River Lagoon to the

21

00:01:22,820 --> 00:01:23,820

west,

22

00:01:23,820 --> 00:01:27,930

the refuge shares boundaries with NASA's Kennedy  
Space Center.

23

00:01:27,930 --> 00:01:30,479

To the north lies the unspoiled beauty

24

00:01:30,479 --> 00:01:33,549

of the Canaveral National Seashore.

25

00:01:33,549 --> 00:01:39,520

Within these borders, a variety of natural habitats provide sanctuary to more than 500

26

00:01:39,520 --> 00:01:40,820

animal species,

27

00:01:40,820 --> 00:01:45,380

including 14 that are considered endangered or threatened.

28

00:01:45,380 --> 00:01:50,390

The stories of the wildlife refuge and the space program have been inseparably linked

29

00:01:50,390 --> 00:01:57,619

since the refuge was established in 1963 to manage the lands surrounding the launch complex.

30

00:01:57,619 --> 00:02:04,969

Today, these 140,000 acres at the northern end of Merritt Island provide a safe haven

31

00:02:04,969 --> 00:02:05,999

for hundreds of

32

00:02:05,999 --> 00:02:11,030

species of wildlife -- and offer visitors a trip back in time to "Old Florida."

33

00:02:11,030 --> 00:02:12,330

NATHANIEL REED/FORMER U.S. UNDERSECRETARY,  
DEPT.

34  
00:02:12,330 --> 00:02:14,590  
OF THE INTERIOR: The combination of a great

35  
00:02:14,590 --> 00:02:24,760  
national wildlife refuge, the space center,  
and the national park -- there's no other

36  
00:02:24,760 --> 00:02:25,880  
place in the United

37  
00:02:25,880 --> 00:02:31,640  
States or in the world that something as magical  
as this exists.

38  
00:02:31,640 --> 00:02:37,440  
NARRATOR: Humans have been drawn to life along  
these shores for thousands of years.

39  
00:02:37,440 --> 00:02:42,700  
The island boasted plentiful fishing and hunting,  
the perfect climate for growing citrus,

40  
00:02:42,700 --> 00:02:47,250  
and a quiet life of relative isolation.

41  
00:02:47,250 --> 00:02:53,010  
By the late 1800s, small communities with  
names like Shiloh, Allenhurst,

42  
00:02:53,010 --> 00:02:57,420  
Wilson and Orsino formed around these industries.

43  
00:02:57,420 --> 00:03:00,850  
From then until the early 1960s,

44  
00:03:00,850 --> 00:03:06,400  
generations of families made this wild paradise  
their home.

45  
00:03:06,400 --> 00:03:12,520  
U.S. Senator Bill Nelson is a fifth-generation Floridian.

46  
00:03:12,520 --> 00:03:15,540  
In 1986, as an astronaut,

47  
00:03:15,540 --> 00:03:21,300  
he flew into space aboard space shuttle Columbia -- launching just miles away from the place

48  
00:03:21,300 --> 00:03:22,300  
where his

49  
00:03:22,300 --> 00:03:23,940  
grandparents' home once stood.

50  
00:03:23,940 --> 00:03:29,470  
NASA LAUNCH COMMENTATOR: We have liftoff, liftoff of Columbia on mission 61C.

51  
00:03:29,470 --> 00:03:38,730  
NELSON: My grandparents, Charles Hart Nelson and Jane Ellen Nelson homesteaded under the

52  
00:03:38,730 --> 00:03:47,370  
Homestead Act on 160 acres of land that today is at the north end of the space shuttle runway.

53  
00:03:47,370 --> 00:03:52,370  
NARRATOR: For the children who visited or grew up on the island, it was a magical place

54  
00:03:52,370 --> 00:03:53,390  
-- filled with

55  
00:03:53,390 --> 00:04:01,420  
animals, woods and waterways, where they could play, learn, and have their own adventures.

56  
00:04:01,420 --> 00:04:06,620  
Decade after decade, generations of families  
enjoyed the serenity of their own piece of

57  
00:04:06,620 --> 00:04:07,710  
paradise on

58  
00:04:07,710 --> 00:04:10,230  
Florida's east coast.

59  
00:04:10,230 --> 00:04:15,750  
But things began to change as the nation's  
space program started to get off the ground.

60  
00:04:15,750 --> 00:04:22,370  
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
-- NASA -- was formed in 1958.

61  
00:04:22,370 --> 00:04:23,720  
And in 1961,

62  
00:04:23,720 --> 00:04:28,740  
Project Mercury began with the launch of Alan  
Shepard, the first American in space.

63  
00:04:28,740 --> 00:04:33,090  
ASTRONAUT ALAN SHEPARD: One-point-two Gs,  
cabin at 14 PSI, oxygen is go.

64  
00:04:33,090 --> 00:04:37,790  
NARRATOR: Shortly thereafter, the nation set  
its sights on the moon.

65  
00:04:37,790 --> 00:04:39,650  
The space agency needed land.

66  
00:04:39,650 --> 00:04:44,570  
And it intended to buy it from property owners

on north Merritt Island.

67

00:04:44,570 --> 00:04:52,400

In 1962, NASA purchased more than 80,000 acres of land previously owned by residents.

68

00:04:52,400 --> 00:04:58,520

It also negotiated with the state of Florida for nearly 56,000 more, for a total of almost

69

00:04:58,520 --> 00:05:02,040

140,000 acres.

70

00:05:02,040 --> 00:05:06,770

Families packed up their belongings, and left the homes and land they'd loved.

71

00:05:06,770 --> 00:05:14,740

In August 1963, NASA and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife worked out a deal establishing

72

00:05:14,740 --> 00:05:15,740

the

73

00:05:15,740 --> 00:05:19,030

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

74

00:05:19,030 --> 00:05:24,700

At the time, Nathaniel Reed was the U.S. Undersecretary of the Department of the Interior.

75

00:05:24,700 --> 00:05:28,492

REED: The administrator and I sat down and he passed me a map.

76

00:05:28,492 --> 00:05:31,880

I looked at the map and I put my hand

77

00:05:31,880 --> 00:05:38,200

across the table and I said, "Administrator,  
from the standpoint of the Assistant Secretary,

78

00:05:38,200 --> 00:05:39,210

it's a deal!"

79

00:05:39,210 --> 00:05:45,110

NARRATOR: In addition to the wildlife refuge,  
in 1975, the stretch of Atlantic beach to

80

00:05:45,110 --> 00:05:46,110

the north of

81

00:05:46,110 --> 00:05:52,020

Kennedy Space Center was designated the Canaveral  
National Seashore -- making it a national

82

00:05:52,020 --> 00:05:53,020

park.

83

00:05:53,020 --> 00:05:59,010

Today, after decades of working side-by-side,  
officials with NASA, the Fish and Wildlife

84

00:05:59,010 --> 00:06:00,010

Service,

85

00:06:00,010 --> 00:06:06,460

and National Park Service still maintain that  
partnering spirit, proving each day that technology

86

00:06:06,460 --> 00:06:07,460

and a

87

00:06:07,460 --> 00:06:10,260

healthy environment can coexist in harmony.

88

00:06:10,260 --> 00:06:16,740

CABANA: This is a 144,000 acre wildlife refuge,

and that's way more than we, the NASA Kennedy

89

00:06:16,740 --> 00:06:17,740

Space

90

00:06:17,740 --> 00:06:18,740

Center, can handle.

91

00:06:18,740 --> 00:06:22,590

Having the Fish and Wildlife Service take care of it for us -- I mean, that is an

92

00:06:22,590 --> 00:06:28,200

outstanding partnership.

93

00:06:28,200 --> 00:06:37,560

REED: Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is such a fascinating place because of the

94

00:06:37,560 --> 00:06:38,590

multiple

95

00:06:38,590 --> 00:06:46,260

ecological systems, from flatwoods, pinewoods, the home of really an extraordinary number

96

00:06:46,260 --> 00:06:47,260

of scrub jay

97

00:06:47,260 --> 00:06:49,520

families, highly endangered.

98

00:06:49,520 --> 00:06:54,110

Then you go into hammocks and into saltwater territory.

99

00:06:54,110 --> 00:07:01,870

You have the lagoon, which is the home, the winter home of thousands of duck, the uplands

100  
00:07:01,870 --> 00:07:04,110  
both in the

101  
00:07:04,110 --> 00:07:09,890  
hammocks and basically on the seashore territories.

102  
00:07:09,890 --> 00:07:14,510  
Plus, the pinewoods are the home of hundreds  
of

103  
00:07:14,510 --> 00:07:20,510  
thousands of migratory birds.

104  
00:07:20,510 --> 00:07:30,290  
NARRATOR: One bird frequently spotted in the  
refuge is the majestic bald eagle.

105  
00:07:30,290 --> 00:07:35,830  
There are several active nests in and around  
Kennedy Space Center, but one in particular

106  
00:07:35,830 --> 00:07:36,830  
has been in

107  
00:07:36,830 --> 00:07:38,210  
use for decades.

108  
00:07:38,210 --> 00:07:43,860  
This large, well-known aerie is nestled high  
in a pine tree off a busy roadway at the heart

109  
00:07:43,860 --> 00:07:44,860  
of the

110  
00:07:44,860 --> 00:07:47,870  
spaceport, where tour bus drivers point it  
out to visitors.

111

00:07:47,870 --> 00:07:54,300

CABANA: It's been there for 20, 30 years;  
very strong, withstood hurricanes.

112

00:07:54,300 --> 00:07:55,380

But the eagle -- I mean,

113

00:07:55,380 --> 00:07:56,520

it's symbolic of what we do.

114

00:07:56,520 --> 00:07:57,580

It's symbolic of our nation.

115

00:07:57,580 --> 00:08:00,960

The perseverance, strength, beauty, of a soaring

116

00:08:00,960 --> 00:08:05,250

eagle -- you know, that's kind of the Kennedy  
Space Center.

117

00:08:05,250 --> 00:08:11,430

NARRATOR: While delicate ecosystems across  
Florida have been lost to development, the

118

00:08:11,430 --> 00:08:12,430

Merritt Island

119

00:08:12,430 --> 00:08:18,650

National Wildlife Refuge has remained a natural  
oasis -- not only for the flora and fauna

120

00:08:18,650 --> 00:08:19,650

that call it

121

00:08:19,650 --> 00:08:25,210

home, but for the visitors who flock here  
for birding, boating, photography or just

122

00:08:25,210 --> 00:08:26,740

serenity.

123

00:08:26,740 --> 00:08:32,409

And for many of those who left long ago, this is a legacy they're proud to be a part of.

124

00:08:32,409 --> 00:08:36,570

MARION: We do like the fact that when we've got a group of people in our living room and

125

00:08:36,570 --> 00:08:37,570

they show

126

00:08:37,570 --> 00:08:41,379

the countdown clock, I'm the first one to point out the fact that our house was just

127

00:08:41,379 --> 00:08:42,379

on the other side of

128

00:08:42,379 --> 00:08:43,379

the countdown clock.

129

00:08:43,379 --> 00:08:48,910

NARRATOR: For years to come, generation after generation will be able to experience "Old

130

00:08:48,910 --> 00:08:50,250

Florida" in all