

The illustration shows a large, brown tree with green leaves. A raccoon is perched on a branch, and another raccoon is hanging from a branch below it. A full moon is in the sky, and a butterfly is flying. The scene is set at night.

Section 3: Peace River

Missy is an easy target on the white sand of the riverbank. So she crawls under a large branch in the water to hide.

Hours after sunset, the moon rises. The light wakes Missy. It seems bright enough to be the sun, but it does not warm her. She stays in the river because the water is warmer than the night air.

A barred owl asks, "Who?" The crickets chirp. The owl asks again. Another owl hoots. Soon, they cackle at each other, their voices echoing across the night air.

Then Missy hears movement. Soon, she smells a raccoon. It is on the branch she is hiding under. The raccoon's weight has shifted the

branch, and Missy is caught. The branch sinks deeper into the water. Then the twigs push her to the sandy river bottom.

Even underwater, Missy can hear the raccoon grab for a fish. Again and again, Missy feels the same motion. When the raccoon catches something, the sounds change. Although she is trapped, she is also safe from the raccoon.

At last, the raccoon leaves, and Missy is free.

PHOSPHATE MINING

by Kayton Nedza, Hardee County Outdoor Classroom

Today, phosphate mines are strip mines. The dirt over the phosphate is moved out of the way and the phosphate is dug up. Some of the large leftover holes become lakes, and huge land areas store clay particles separated from the phosphate. Like agriculture, power-generating utilities and cities, phosphate mining consumes much ground

water and may have helped cause Kissingen Springs to dry up during the 1950s. Before 1975, when stricter laws were passed, mined land was not reclaimed, and several spills polluted the Peace River and some tributaries. Mining provides jobs. Reclaimed mines can be used for agriculture, parks, wetlands, lakes and housing developments.