

Ukulele: As Easy As C, D, G (and Em)

In the late 1800's, the Portuguese introduced the ukulele to Hawaii. In the latter part of 2021 "Ukulele" was first listed as an activity group on <http://waltoncountysnowbirds.com> for club members on the Emerald Coast of Florida.

Although the listing didn't appear until this season, the group first got together in January 2020, starting with only three people and growing through word of mouth and announcements at general meetings to seven. Beginning Ukulele was slated to be an activity for 2020-2021, but last year's season was cancelled.

A typical uke has four soft nylon or metal strings. Mahogany, koa, rosewood, maple, spruce, and cedar wood may be used for the instrument's figure-eight-shaped body. Less expensive models can be made of plastic. Ukuleles come in four standard sizes: soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone. Each size has a distinct tone.

Members this season are asked to bring their own soprano, concert, or tenor uke. These sizes are all tuned the same way while the baritone has different, lower-pitched tuning. Concert and tenor sized ukuleles are recommended most often for beginning players.

Jan Hoover reports that signup for the activity began on December 6, at 2021, before anyone volunteered to facilitate the offering. Based on the enthusiasm of the 2020 group, there was faith that a leader would be found. Two members did come forward and helped with organization.

The first meeting was held at St. Andrew's By-The-Sea Episcopal Church in Destin after all who registered were contacted by Den Laub using a list provided by Len Hoover. Colleen Smith arranged for the initial venue. There is not a single person designated as leader, but Den is listed on the website for contact purposes. Group members work together to find places to meet and pieces to learn.

On the website, "Ukulele" is an activity described as "a gathering of beginners". Within the group, there is actually a range of experience with music and with stringed instruments. One member plays guitar and sings. One has taught music. Another writes and plays her own songs. Others are novices. Some contribute by providing copies of music. There are long-time Walton County Snowbird members and those who joined for the first time this season.

At present, meetings take place at Seascape Resort and Conference Center in Miramar Beach. Susan Padberg suggested the musicians meet at her condo. Each Friday morning at 10:00, about half a dozen members of this "self directed multi functional dynamic uke group" (according to Den) congregate for an hour's fun.

"Jambalaya", "When The Saints Go Marching In", "Streets Of Laredo", and "Teach Your Children" are four of the songs being learned and practiced by these strummers and vocalists.

The group is having great fun sharing skills and talent and spending time with like-minded friends.

Sounds like "Ukulele" will be a permanent entry on the activity list for the Walton County Snowbirds!