Everglades Water Supply Summit
The Everglades Foundation held a major event in Tallahassee January 17th and 18th to educate our policy makers on the importance of Everglades Restoration.

Left: Manley Fuller presented the FWF Wildlife Conservationist of the Year Award to Debbie Harrison during the Everglades Summit Breakfast. Debbie and her late husband, Thom Rumberger, have been champions of Everglades restoration for many years.

Right: Sarah Owen Gledhill, FWF North-east Florida Planning Advocate, and Sarah Bailey, FWF Wildlife Legacy Club member and former St. Johns County Commissioner, stand with the Honorable Bob Graham at the Everglades Summit on January 17.

FWF staff and volunteers help at the Everglades Summit registration table. From left: Neal George, Rosanna Gill, Jake Gwynn-Shapiro and Michelle Hakemoller.

From left: Neal George (FWF Staff), Henry Harding and Jessica Whalen (I.D.E.A.S. Representatives), Rep. Rich Glorioso (R) of Plant City, Claudia Farren (FWF Consultant) and Mary Jean Yon (Audubon of Florida).

Betsy Knight
1938-2012

Betsy Knight will be remembered as a woman who devoted a major portion of her life to Florida’s wildlife. She served as a member of the FWF board of directors from 1995 to 2008. Betsy passed away on February 17, 2012 at the age of 73. Until two years ago, Betsy was the only wildlife rehabilitator in Florida who was certified to rehabilitate bear cubs. It took a great deal of convincing by Betsy for the state’s wildlife agency to allow her to raise bear cubs that were orphaned by fires.

Announcing the 75th Annual Conservation Awards Banquet, June 16, 2012.

Please mark your calendars and watch for further information about upcoming events at the St. Petersburg Bayfront Hilton, June 15-17, marking the Federation’s 75th anniversary.

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CHAIR’S MESSAGE
by Jim Schuette

‘tis the season to be active

Some people say Florida has no seasons. Those people have insulated themselves from seeing nature’s reality. I wonder...if they can’t see the seasons, how can they see how anything else natural functions, much less how it affects them? Occasionally I stop and send wishes their way such that their lives might be enriched from seeing nature’s seasons, how can they see how much time they have provided to local economies?

In January, on a visit to St. Vincent Island, I helped the Feds protect sea turtles eggs by removing an egg-eating wild boar through their hunting program. In Haines City I was fortunate to witness Secretary Salazar officially announcing the creation of the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area. Closer to home, I took a trip down Florida’s first wild and scenic river…the Loxahatchee. Due to scheduling issues I will miss out on the great annual Ocean-to-Lake event where bikers, hikers and horsback riders camp their way across Palm Beach County. It’s been a busy year so far!! I can hardly wait to see where the Boy Scout destinations will be...and I refuse to add up how much I have provided to local economies!

Writing this, it comes to my attention that one thing ties all these activities together...WATER!! It is what makes Florida livable in the most literal sense of the word. Our economy, quality of life and simply our ability to survive is dependent upon protecting our water sources. It doesn’t matter what your political affiliation is; or what church you do or don’t go to; or if your children are in public or private schools; or if you are 7th generation or a Yankee; or even if you are still doing 40/week, or have finished that portion of your life. Everyone needs Florida to have clean fresh water.

Although the epicenter of Legislative Session occurs in Tallahassee, it is an event in which everyone can and should be involved...and you can participate from your own home on your own schedule!

How and why would you engage in this season’s activities?

First, I’ll do the why. There are several bills in this year’s session that would result in the further deterioration of Florida’s water quality and abundance. One expands and withdraws permits from aquifers, which would further jeopardize water quantities. To get a visual of this, when you visit Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, stop at the actual spring for which they named White Springs. It’s that green puddle in the middle of the remains of the bath-house and hotel.

Then wonder where the water went. Or go to Gold Head Branch State Park and look at the lake beds there, with the series of water level gauges marking the water’s retreat. Note the huge, empty parking lots. Wonder about the economic impacts these environmental disasters had. Where did all the people move to whose livelihoods depended upon these natural attractions? Is the continued loss of these natural wonders and the lack of places to take the kids on the weekend or after school the reason Florida’s population has lost their connection to nature and appreciation for the importance of quality water?

Unfortunately, we still witness natural catastrophes occurring. Although BP has been able to keep most of its disaster under the surface, tell that to the people who are out of business because of it. Or go look at a green Indian River Lagoon, dying of thirst from lack of fresh water. A similar image was seen in the Caloosahatchee earlier in the year, but that was mainly nutrients in the water. Imagine where all the surrounding businesses will go if we allow the water they depend upon protecting our water sources.

Floridians have a wealth of natural resources which can contribute to our state’s economy, quality of life and simply our ability to survive. One day I hope all will appreciate for the importance of the water, as well as the surrounding wildlife and habitat’s that we are so fortunate to live in.

“Take care of nature and your children will inherit a better world.” Jim Schuette
Manley received recognition from the board of directors for his 25 years of service to FWF at the January Board meeting.

Dear Members and Friends of FWF,

Thank you all for your wonderful support. It keeps us going. We are working across Florida on behalf of conservation of our lands, water, fish and wildlife. Recently, Federal Judge Robert Hinkle reaffirmed our efforts to protect Florida’s waterways from excessive nutrients. We have been well represented by Earthjustice in our lawsuit in defense of Florida’s waters. Contrary to what our opponents say, Florida cannot afford to further delay addressing our current water pollution challenges. This is a long tough slog, but as they say in the country, there is no quit in us. We are working with many partners in support of restoring the Everglades and for the state’s budget to contain needed funding to help us accomplish this great goal. We, through a number of our Directors, staff and members, actively assisted the Everglades Foundation with their Everglades Water Summit in Tallahassee where I was able to present Debbie Harrison with FWF’s Wildlife Conservationist of the Year award for her lifetime of dedicated work on behalf of Florida’s environment as well as acknowledging the great commitment she and her late husband, Thom Rumberger, have shown for the restoration of Florida’s Everglades. Earlier in January, Nancy Payton and I representing our staff, and FWF directors Ned Stone, Billy Causey, Terry Gibson and Martha Musgrove participated in the Everglades Coalition Annual Conference at Hutchinson Island.

I was honored at the Everglades Coalition to be able to present awards to two of Florida’s long term conservation champions, Estus Whitfield and Nathaniel Pryor Reed. Estus was a recipient of the Jim Webb award from the Everglades Coalition recognizing Estus’ long term dedication to restoring Florida’s Everglades and promoting sound environmental policies for Florida in multiple gubernatorial administrations from Governor Askew to Governor Bush. Nat Reed received the Florida Wildlife Federation’s Eagle statuette recognizing his lifetime of dedication to conserving Florida’s and our nation’s environment. Nat is the Florida Wildlife Federation’s most recent inductee into the Florida Wildlife Federation’s Conservation Hall of Fame. It is an honor to continue to work with both of these gentlemen on behalf of Florida’s outdoors!

Amidst all of that we had our winter board meeting at the new educational center at the St. Mark’s National Wildlife Refuge where we had a refuge tour in their new electric vehicle and at Wakulla Springs State Park where we took the tour boat now powered by electric motors manufactured by Ray Electric motors in Cape Coral, Florida. The Federation is a strong supporter of the expansion of St. Mark’s Refuge to help protect Gulf Coastal watersheds which are great fish and wildlife habitat and which provide great outdoors recreation including nature observation, fishing and hunting. We have been working for funding for this worthwhile project.

FWF along with many others has been working on behalf of the...
Florida Panther Update

In 2011 the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reported the deaths of 22 panthers and the recovery of a panther’s skeletal remains. Eight of the deaths were documented road deaths. One panther was shot and another was listed as poached. Below is a complete summary of information relating to each panther’s death. UCFP is an Uncollared Florida Panther and FP is a Collared Florida Panther.

2011 DEATHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Discovered</th>
<th>Panther ID</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/30/11</td>
<td>UCFP165</td>
<td>3-4 yrs</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>SR29 near Collier/Hendry County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/19/11</td>
<td>UCFP164</td>
<td>3-4 yrs</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>SR29, Owl Hammock curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/14/11</td>
<td>FP188</td>
<td>3.5 yrs</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Private Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/03/11</td>
<td>UCFP163</td>
<td>3-4 yrs</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Private Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/29/11</td>
<td>FP156</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Picayune Strand State Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/11</td>
<td>UCFP162</td>
<td>1-1.5 yrs</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>SR29, Owl Hammock curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/06/11</td>
<td>UCFP161</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Intraspecific Aggression</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Silver Strand citrus grove, north of Immokalee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/01/11</td>
<td>FP186</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Intraspecific Aggression</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Bird Rookery Swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/02/11</td>
<td>K325</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Wild fire</td>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Big Cypress National Preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/02/11</td>
<td>K324</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Wild fire</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/02/11</td>
<td>K323</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Wild fire</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/11</td>
<td>UCFP160</td>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>US41 near 50 Mile Bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/11</td>
<td>FP153</td>
<td>11 yr 10 mo</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>U41 (2 mi west of Port of the Islands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/11</td>
<td>UCFP159</td>
<td>Info pending</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Info pending</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Info pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17/11</td>
<td>UCFP158</td>
<td>Info pending</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Shot</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Seminole Geneva, FL Old Mims Rd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/11</td>
<td>UCFP157</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Big Cypress National Preserve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sad news of panther deaths is offset by the birth of 32 kittens to 11 collared female panthers. In reality, the number of new kittens is higher because only collared panthers can be tracked. Uncollared females with kittens have been photographed using the Corkscrew Road underpass in Lee County and the new underpass on CR846 east of Immokalee, Collier County.

2011 Births

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Discovered</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Age of Litter</th>
<th># Males # Females</th>
<th>Kitten IDs</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/15/11</td>
<td>FP110</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>10-14 days</td>
<td>0 2</td>
<td>K343, K344</td>
<td>Okolacoochee Slough State Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/07/11</td>
<td>FP113</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>~4 wks</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>K342</td>
<td>Private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/10/11</td>
<td>FP151</td>
<td>FP177</td>
<td>21 days</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>K340, K341</td>
<td>Big Cypress Nat. Preserve, Turner River Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/09/11</td>
<td>FP145</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12 days</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>K337, K338, K339</td>
<td>BCNP, Deep Lake Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/26/11</td>
<td>FP188</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>18 days</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>K334, K335, K336</td>
<td>Private property, Lee County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29/11</td>
<td>FP182</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>14 days</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>K330, K331, K332, K333</td>
<td>Big Cypress National Preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/26/11</td>
<td>FP184</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12-14 days</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>K326, K327, K328, K329</td>
<td>BCNP, Addition Lands Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/15/11</td>
<td>FP162</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>4 0</td>
<td>K322, K323, K324, K325</td>
<td>Big Cypress National Preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/09/11</td>
<td>FP113</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>14-17 days</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>K321</td>
<td>Private Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/11</td>
<td>FP175</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>21 days</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>K319, K320</td>
<td>BCNP, Bear Island Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/11</td>
<td>FP178</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12-14 days</td>
<td>2 0</td>
<td>K317, K318</td>
<td>BCNP, Bear Island Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/11</td>
<td>FP148</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12 days</td>
<td>2 0</td>
<td>K315, K316</td>
<td>Picayune Strand State Forest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart below reviews deaths as of mid-February.

Heartfelt Appreciation

The Federation thanks the Felburn Foundation, Martin Foundation, and Zamo Charitable Trust for their generous support of the Southwest Florida Office’s ongoing campaigns. These grants are allowing the Federation to pursue creative strategies to protect native wildlife and preserve their habitats.

For updated information on Florida panther births and deaths, please visit [http://www.floridapanthernet.org/index.php/pulse](http://www.floridapanthernet.org/index.php/pulse/).
Okefenokee and St. Johns Watershed Great Waters Petition

In January, the Northeast and Tallahassee offices of the Florida Wildlife Federation collaborated with our conservation partners to petition the America’s Great Waters’ Coalition to list the Okefenokee and St. Johns watersheds as one ecosystem meriting the title of Great Waters. With the assistance of the St. Johns River Alliance, St. Johns Riverkeeper and National Wildlife Federation, the petition was submitted to add the ecosystem to a national list of Great Waters which will declare it as a valued and productive natural resource.

The Okefenokee and St. Johns watersheds are intrinsically tied to one another. At first glance these watersheds appear to be geographically isolated from one another, but in fact they share a drainage basin just east of Jacksonville. These ecosystems provide vital resources and services for their communities, and the success and vitality of one ecosystem has a direct impact on the other.

A number of species utilize the system. The Northeast offices’ keystone species, the Florida black bear, federally endangered North Atlantic Right Whales, federally endangered West Indian manatee and federally threatened Gulf Sturgeon are a few of the many species that freely traverse the marshes, creeks and rivers.

In 2011, the Great Waters Coalition denied the petition for the St. Johns River Basin. We hope the revised petition expanding the boundaries to encompass both watersheds will elevate the national significance of this treasured ecosystem.

A Supporter and Mentor will be Missed

The Northeast office has said goodbye to another dear friend. Crescent Beach resident Gordon Lohman, who passed away on Christmas Eve. Gordon was a supporter of the Northeast Florida operations since day one and was always ready to help fulfill our needs to accomplish our programs. Most importantly, I will treasure the time Gordon spent with me. He videotaped my testimony at public hearings. At first, I was not aware of this and at the time was almost embarrassed. However, what he did with the films afterwards made a lasting impression. I went to his house and we watched them together while he critiqued my public speaking. We counted the “ums,” watched my hand twirl a pen, and looked for opportunities to add more reflection in my voice to underscore a point. I am forever grateful for his time and constructive comments. He is greatly missed.

FCC Efforts Growing in Northeast Florida

Enthusiasm for the newly formed Florida Conservation Coalition (FCC) is starting to grow in Northeast Florida. At a recent event hosted by the St. Johns Riverkeeper, former Department of Natural Resources Secretary Vickie Tschinkel spoke to a standing room-only crowd of approximately 150 about the Coalition. We used this opportunity to launch FCCs effort to pass a resolution by all local governments in support of the state’s water use decisions being kept at the regional level rather than centralizing all decisions in Tallahassee. In Northeast Florida, we are coordinating with the community to seek successful passage of such resolutions. St Johns County will hear the resolution in early March and we have a potential sponsor in Duval County. Other partners are working in Clay County. If you are in Northeast Florida and would like to help, please email us at northeastfwf@fwfonline.org with the local government(s) of interest to you.

Don’t miss the 13th Annual Black Bear Festival at Caldwell Park in Umatilla this year! The City of Umatilla will celebrate the festival on March 31st from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It’s free for all ages!

Umatilla is located in Lake County, just south of the Ocala National Forest. For more information, visit the festival website at http://umatillachamber.org/BlackBearFest/ or call 352-669-3511.
CHAIR from page 2

upon for their survival to go the way of White Springs and Gold Head. Imagine the Everglades...gone.

Now for the how. Look at the articles in this issue of FFWN and the Capitol Watch updates for the latest on the proposed bills. One proposal gives away thousands of acres of waterways owned by you. The edges of these waterways are required to maintain water quality and quantities. Giving them away is destroying water. Another bill ignores the BP disaster and puts our coasts and the economies that rely on them in danger. One bill actually attempts to reduce how much you subsidize the lifestyles of those who build on high-risk beaches (you can be for something that has been proposed!!), while another argues that Florida cannot afford water as clean as the water the rest of the nation enjoys. I agree there are things we can no longer afford given the financial challenges we are in. Educating our children, taking care of the sick and elderly and ensuring we have clean, fresh water are not among of them. Let the legislators in Tallahassee know you value water. Call them. Write to them. Tweet them. Sign on to the petitions. Do it now. Do it for the sake of the economy. Do it for the sake of the environment. Do it for the sake of our quality of life. Do it for the sake of Florida’s future. Do it for the sake of our survival. JUST DO IT! We can’t afford not to protect our water. Water is Florida.

Our being active in the season will benefit everyone.

FWF welcomes two new Board Members

These new directors were elected to the board in September 2011. We appreciate all of their efforts on behalf of the organization and that of all of our outstanding board members who work so hard to help FWF continue to be a leader in the conservation of Florida’s fish, wildlife and natural resources.

New Eagle Club Members:
Nace Hopple, Jr., Gainesville
Alexander A. Doska, Orange City
Blythe Gilmour Patel, Highland Beach
Thomas J. Flood, Naples
David M. Foster, Jacksonville
Cynthia M. Sargent, Lake Forest

New Life Members:
Howard T. Petrie, Jupiter
J. B. Mittan, Tallahassee
Mr. & Mrs. Kelly J. Mather, Sebastian
Rose Brantley, Tallahassee
Leslie M. Roach, Gulfstream

Thank you for your support!

E. C. Vandagrift, III

A native of Ocala, E. C. Vandagrift is an At-Large Director of the FWF Board. He is a retired banker and investment advisor who enjoys boating, canoeing and kayaking as well as other outdoor activities. E. C. wants to learn as much as possible about the Federation in order to make the maximum contribution as a board member particularly in the area of donor development and fundraising.

IN MEMORIAM

Donations have been received in memory of:

Howard Elkins
by Ms. Patricia S. Stover

Gordon R. Lohman
by Amsted Industries Incorporated

The Florida Wildlife Federation truly appreciates receiving these memorial donations.
2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

We are now past the halfway point of the 60-day Legislative Session. Please note the following items of interest and please take action if you so desire:

Florida Forever Funding: Even with an outpouring of support from Floridians for Florida Forever, the House of Representatives and Senate have, to date, zeroed out any money for this critical program. Governor Rick Scott has proposed $15 million in his budget and this position needs to be supported. Please contact the following members of the Legislature and voice your support for $15 million for Florida Forever:

- Senate President Mike Haridopolos, haridopolos.mike.web@flsenate.gov, 850-487-5056
- House Speaker Dean Cannon, dean.cannon@myfloridahouse.gov, (850) 488-2742
- Senator Don Gaetz, gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov, (850) 487-5009
- Rep. Denise Grimsley, denise.grimsley@myfloridahouse.gov, (850) 488-3457
- Senator Alan Hays, hays.alan.web@flsenate.gov, (850) 487-5014
- Rep. Will Weatherford, will.weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov, (850) 488-5744

- Senate Bill 1362/House Bill 1033 (Sovereignty submerged lands bill) which would have drastically changed who owns the lands along our lakes and rivers, has stalled and appears to have died this session. This bill has been the subject of massive public outcry, so thank you for voicing your opposition. While no issue is declared officially dead until the last day of the session, this one hopefully has been defeated.

- SB 7092 Water Management Districts. This bill increases legislative authority and oversight over the water management districts, thereby further politicizing policy decisions that should be based on science and conservation so that our waters may be cleaned up and our water recharge lands protected. This bill also strips needed funds from the Districts. Please contact your Senator and ask that this bill be amended so that the Districts have the flexibility to adequately manage water and are sufficiently funded.

- SB 1158/HB 695 Oil Drilling on State Lands. These bills open up public lands to oil and gas exploration and extraction. There is an ongoing extraction facility on Blackwater River State Forest in Northwest Florida, and we are hopeful that this bill can be changed to limit the impact of this bill to this ongoing facility. Please contact your Senator and Representative and ask them to amend this bill to only address Blackwater River State Forest.

You may contact your Senators and Representatives by going to the following web address and inserting your address or zip code: http://www.flsenate.gov/senators/find.

Thank you!

Florida Conservation Coalition Rally at Capitol, November 30, 2011

FWF, with Senator Bob Graham and others, urged officials, policy makers and candidates to protect and conserve Florida’s natural resources essential to the well-being and quality of life of the residents of this state and its long-term economic prosperity in a rally at the State Capital on November 30, 2011. This was the first public event held by the Florida Conservation Coalition (FCC).
available to pay its claims. A Category 3 hurricane, or series of lesser hurricanes, could bankrupt this state-run insurer and set the wheels in motion to cripple our economy through higher assessments on all insured’s, not just Citizens policyholders. That keeps private insurance companies from coming into the state and drives existing insurers out of the state (companies like Cotton States, State Farm and others).

- The Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (FHCF or Cat Fund) is underfunded by $2.3 billion. The FHCF serves as a state-backed reinsurer, providing the funds necessary to cover claims over and above what the regular insurers can pay. It is funded by an assessment on all insurance companies doing business in the state. They pass that cost right through to you, the customer, and we have all been paying for it on our property and auto insurance since 2004 and 2005 when we had our last very active hurricane season.

- In the event the FHCF can’t meet its obligations, the state will have to go to the bond market at a time when even finding a willing seller is difficult and the price could be very high. Once again, we the public get hit for the cost.

- Business associations claim that the pass-thru nature of this assessment is nothing more than a hidden tax on all Floridians that creates a significant impediment to business growth in Florida.

One remedy to this problem is to start reducing the size of Citizens Insurance by gradually increasing the premiums and moving much of its book of business to private carriers. A gradual increase has already been approved and legislation has been introduced to expedite this process. However, those bills have yet to be heard because of the aforementioned reluctance, on the part of some legislators, to set the wheels in motion that may result in higher insurance costs for those living in storm prone regions of the state or where a limited insurance market has already diminished affordable options.

Another remedy is to reduce the size of the FHCF by limiting assessments and forcing carriers to purchase reinsurance from the private markets. Again, that may negatively impact prices in the short run. However, it will serve to force the carriers and state regulators to appropriately price property insurance in Florida and could lead to a more robust market as insurers begin to see that the state is serious about rebalancing the market. Added competition would serve to moderate prices over the long run.

Dr. Jack E. Nicholson, the Chief Operating Officer of the FHCF, uses a helpful analogy to describe the precarious nature of Florida’s state-backed insurance programs. He describes a situation in which the doctor tells you that the medicine prescribed for your two children (let’s give them the nicknames “Cat” and “Citr” for short) really doesn’t work and that he recommends a new medicine but it will cost a little more. Most of us would say it is worth it to pay a little more rather than to go on giving our children medicine that does not work. The Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund and Citizens Insurance are sick and have been getting bad medicine. It may cost less now but it does nothing to remedy the underlying cause. Thus, we are all exposed to much higher costs and potential financial calamity when the next big hurricane hits. Meanwhile, we subsidize poor development decisions by having an over-exposed insurance program that covers too many risks.

When will policymakers face the facts and end this practice? Will they do so in time and before the “Big One” hits? If reform legislation fails in the 2012 Session, constituents need to ask the candidates for office where they stand on reform of the FHCF and Citizens Insurance. They need to ask incumbents what they have been doing to encourage reform. The time for careful consideration of options may be running short. While Florida has been spared a major hurricane for six years, that lucky streak is bound to end.

A short video explaining why the Cat Fund should be reformed can be viewed by visiting: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca7gfNPaC2o&feature=player_embedded

Betsy Knight was born in Orlando and spent the first years of her life in that area before moving to Tallahassee and then to Calhoun County in 1962. She was a loving mother to her four children, nine grandchildren and one great grandchild. Environmental education was very important to Betsy and, for the last 30 years, she and her volunteers brought permanently injured eagles, owls and other small creatures from the wildlife sanctuary into the classrooms of Florida schools with presentations and discussions about proper treatment of wildlife in Florida. Betsy and her entourage could be found at the Wakulla Springs Wildlife Festival year after year as well as many other outdoor festivals around North Florida. She also loved the annual Bear Festival in Umatilla. Betsy, who was an Eagle Club member of FWF, will be missed by her many friends and colleagues. The Florida Wildlife Federation was grateful to have Betsy serve on the board of directors for thirteen years. She worked very hard for the protection and care of Florida’s wildlife. She was their personal advocate and protector.

Diane Hines, V.P. of Admin.
Call For Director Nominations

If you are interested in serving as a director of the Florida Wildlife Federation during the September 2012 to September 2013 term, or if you wish to nominate someone to fill one of these positions, please write to the Florida Wildlife Federation Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870; FAX (850) 942-4431.

Nominations must be submitted by May 1, 2012.

To be eligible, a candidate must be a resident of Florida and a member in good standing of the Florida Wildlife Federation. District and Regional Directors must reside in the region or district for which they would serve. Officers and At-Large Directors may reside anywhere within the state.

Federation Directors are expected to regularly attend Federation meetings, participate in Federation activities, assist in building Federation membership, be actively involved in fund-raising efforts, attend public workshops, act as a liaison with other conservation organizations, and generally promote and lead state-wide conservation activities through the Florida Wildlife Federation. Being an FWF Director requires a substantial commitment of time and resources but will give the individual an opportunity to be a conservation leader in Florida.

Also, if you are interested in assisting the directors in your region, or in serving on one of the Federation’s committees, please contact Diane Hines at the Federation office in Tallahassee at (850) 656-7113 or dhines@fwfonline.org.

LAKELAND RESIDENT DONATES WOOD DUCK NESTING BOXES TO TENOROC FISH MANAGEMENT AREA

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) describes its Tenoroc facility, which is located two miles northeast of Lakeland, as "a continuous linkage of lakes and marshes, open grasslands, and wooded hills between the Green Swamp and the Peace River". This makes Tenoroc an important refuge for wildlife, and serves as a top-notch destination for anglers, birdwatchers, hikers, and horseback riders. Previously (in the 1960s and 1970s), this property had been extensively mined for phosphate, leaving behind steep-sided lakes and spoil mounds, but few of the hollowed trees desired by wood ducks for nesting sites.

Bill Smith and his family have elected to address this deficiency by donating eight cypress nesting boxes hand-crafted in Dr. Bob's Toy Box (Florida Wildlife Federation director Bob Taylor). With the guidance of Tenoroc's manager, Danon Moxley, Bill Smith and his family are placing these much-needed nesting structures at sites near the facility's lakes and marshes which will both attract nesting ducks and be reasonably accessible for his grandchildren to monitor and maintain. What a wonderful way to express one's love of nature and our environment!

Polk County in central Florida is home to perhaps a dozen sites similar to Tenoroc. The Water Management Districts, and private conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Green Horizon Land Trust and Audubon also own land there. By extrapolation to the entire state, there must be dozens or even hundreds of places where nesting boxes are needed for cavity-nesting birds such as wood ducks, screech owls, barred owls, blue birds and many others.

Individuals electing to sponsor boxes to be placed in these areas not only benefit the location and the birds, but also the Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF). The Federation buys the cypress and Dr. Bob provides the shop equipment and all the labor, pro bono. Thus, all revenue in excess of lumber cost provides a much needed donation to FWF, an organization which many consider to be to be the best and most effective of its type in the Southeastern U.S.

If you wish to sponsor one or more of these nesting boxes, they are available in four (4) sizes as follow.

1. Small, for blue birds and wrens, etc............$ 30.00 plus postage
2. Medium, for wood ducks and screech owls........$ 60.00 plus postage
3. Large, for black-bellied whistling ducks..............$ 70.00 plus postage
4. X large, for barred owls..........................$ 150.00 plus postage

Your donation is tax deductible to the extent provided by law. For more information, contact Bob Taylor at 863-439-2251 or FWF at 850-656-7113. If needed, someone at FWF will help coordinate the installation of your boxes at the site of your choice, if possible.
East County Water Control District (ECWCD) hosts its inaugural Wings Over Water Festival (WOW) at Lee County’s Harn’s Marsh to help the public discover the beauty of southwest Florida’s water, land and wildlife.

The two-day festival helps celebrate southwest Florida’s natural resources and includes an array of programs on local waterways and wildlife from Friday, March 9 to Saturday, March 10.

Harn’s Marsh is located in the eastern portion of Lee County off of Sunshine Blvd. in Lehigh Acres. In the late 1980’s, ECWCD transformed the 578-acre farmland into an active stormwater facility helping to filter water and reduce flooding to the Orange River. The water control structures have helped create a lush habitat for snail kites, limpkin and more than 140 species of animals.

With field excursions at Harn’s Marsh. The public is invited to partake in the guided walking tour and historical presentation about Harn’s Marsh and water management practices. Those interested in participating in the free event must reserve a spot www.wingsoverwaterfestival.com.

On Saturday, March 10, the district will host the WOW Festival, a free nature festival for community members and visitors. A variety of on-site activities will be offered at Harn’s Marsh from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. including lectures from experts; exhibitions by wildlife and education-related organizations and businesses from throughout Lee County; children’s activities, guided walks and various species of flora and fauna.

Throughout the day, community leaders, environmental experts and national personalities will share their knowledge about the wild wonders of southwest Florida and the importance of protecting our natural resources through our seminar series.

The festival seminars conclude with a keynote presentation from James Currie, host and producer of Nikon’s Birding Adventures TV show and a rare bird expert. As a life-long birder and native of South Africa, Currie has many years experience in the birding and wildlife tourism arenas. He has led professional wildlife and birding tours for 15 years and his passion for birding and remote cultures has taken him to, amongst others, Central and South America, Fiji, Australia, North America, Africa, Europe, Madagascar and Iceland. He has contributed to several publications, including the acclaimed Southern African Birdfinder. He is also an expert in the field of sustainable development and holds a Bachelor’s Degree in African Languages and a Masters degree in Sustainable Environmental Management. From 2004-2007 James worked as the Managing Director of the Africa Foundation, a non-profit organization that directs its efforts towards the betterment of communities surrounding wildlife areas in Africa. The educational series is made possible by the generosity of sponsors: The News-Press Media Group, Mosaic, Lehigh Regional Medical Center and AIM Engineering and Surveying, Inc.

For more information, visit www.wingsoverwaterfestival.com or call 239-368-0044 x17.

Writing Effective Letters
Address letters to Members of the House of Representatives as follows:
The Honorable John Doe
Florida House of Representatives
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Address letters to Senators this way:
Senator Jane Doe
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Be absolutely certain you spell your legislator’s name correctly and use the correct address. If you don’t, you could lose your audience.

Type or print legibly. Sign your name neatly and give your address correctly so they can respond to your letter.

Keep letters, e-mails, and faxes brief. Never write more than one page. Concise written correspondence is more likely to grab and keep the reader’s attention.

Identify your issue or opinion at the beginning of the letter, don’t bury your main point under trivial text.

Cover only one issue per letter. If you have another issue to address, write another letter.

Back up your opinions with supporting facts. Your letter should inform the reader.

Avoid abbreviations or acronyms, and don’t use technical jargon. Rather than impressing your reader, such terms will only frustrate them or her.

Don’t send the same letter to more than one legislator. Personalized letters have more impact.

To contact legislators via email, visit myfloridahouse.gov and myfloridasenate.gov.
Dear Governor Scott,

I write to introduce you to the Florida Conservation Coalition and to provide you with information that we have received from several county commissions throughout Florida.

The Florida Conservation Coalition (FCC) was created in 2011 following the legislative session that brought major changes to several decades of Florida conservation law and programs. Former Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham is founder and chairman, and Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel Reed is vice-chairman of the FCC. The Coalition decided early on that its first priority would be water resources and the water management districts. We believe the districts need more adequate funding and stability, and should be managed on a regional basis with executive oversight, rather than by the legislature.

Even before the FCC was officially announced on November 30, several counties were expressing serious concern about changes brought to the water management districts by the 2011 Legislature. The Taylor Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution addressing its concerns for water management districts on October 18, 2011. Twelve (12) other county commissions have since adopted resolutions. These counties include: Broward, Citrus, Gadsden, Jefferson, Lee, Leon, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Polk, Sarasota, and Wakulla. Additionally, representatives of the nine (9) counties of the Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon approved a resolution. These counties are: Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Osceola, Glades, Highlands, Lee, and Hendry.

Each of these resolutions contains the following three (3) statements:

1. The county supports the water management structure and functions as listed in Chapter 373, F.S.
2. The county supports adequate funding for water management districts, such that they may accomplish their lawful missions of managing and protecting regional and local water resources.
3. The county opposes the centralization - command and control of regional and local water resources within the executive and/or legislative branches of government, or by a statewide board or authority.

Several of the resolutions contain an additional fourth statement:
4. The county opposes any effort to move water from public ownership to ownership or total control by private interests.

Attached are three of the resolutions for your reference: Polk County, Sarasota County, and the nine (9) member County Coalition. Several other counties are currently considering adopting resolutions.

We hope you find these expressions of concern by counties throughout Florida of serious interest.

We would appreciate the opportunity to work with you in the coming days and thereafter to seek better management of Florida’s water resources and districts.

Very respectfully,

Estus Whitfield*
Member, Florida Conservation Coalition

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Honorables Ilene Lieberman  
County Commissioner  
Broward County

Dear Commissioner Lieberman,

This letter is to let you know that the Florida Conservation Coalition has informed Governor Scott and legislative leaders of your county commission’s resolution in support of water management districts. Attached to this email is the letter we delivered to Governor Scott’s office. The letter was also delivered separately to Senate President Haridopolos, President-elect Gaetz, Speaker Cannon, and Speaker-designate Weatherford.

Thirteen (13) other counties have so far adopted similar resolutions and representatives of a nine member south Florida coalition have approved a resolution. Several other counties are currently considering adopting resolutions.

The Florida Conservation Coalition is a non-partisan coalition of conservation and other concerned organizations and concerned citizens devoted to protecting and conserving our state’s water and natural resources that are essential for our quality of life and long-term economic prosperity. The Coalition was founded and is chaired by Former Governor and U. S Senator Bob Graham. Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel Reed is vice-chair.

The 2011 Legislature passed SB 2142 which resulted in draconian cuts in the budgets and staffs of the regional water management districts. This bill also took oversight of district budgets from the Governor and placed it under the Legislature. No longer are budget and other decisions made by district governing boards composed of lay citizens who reside in the region; they are now made by the Legislature. Due to the imposed budget constraints, the districts are no longer sustainable.

The Legislature is currently considering legislation (SB 1986) that will place complete control of water management district budgets in the Legislature. This will further politicize and undermine regional water management in Florida and reduce the ability of the districts to perform their duties. This bill is a distinct move away from regional water management and could result in legislators from the opposite end of the state deciding how your water is managed.

The bill, SPB 7092, renamed SB 1986, was passed by the Senate Budget Committee on February 15. However, SB 1986 has not passed the Senate and has no companion bill in the House. The bill is expected to be voted on by the Senate this week.

SB 1986 and last year’s SB 2142 fly in the face of your county resolution that calls for a water management structure as delineated in the 2010 version of Chapter 373, F.S.; adequate funding of water management districts; and no centralization – command and control of local and regional water resources by Tallahassee.

Now is the time to step up and protect regional water management.

Call or write Governor Scott, Senate President Haridopolos, House Speaker Cannon, and your legislative delegation and voice your concerns. Florida’s water resources would fare much better without last year’s SB 2142 and this year’s SB 1986; what is needed is to return Chapter 373, F.S. to the way it existed in 2010. Oversight of district budgets and activities by the Governor and Department of Environmental Protection is the appropriate means of overseeing the water management districts. The Legislature has every right to review district budgets, audits, and annual reports and to step in if necessary, but it should not micromanage the districts, making it nearly impossible to do the job expected of them.

The Florida Conservation Coalition would like to thank you for your leadership in highlighting the importance of water management districts in protecting and managing Florida’s water resources. You can stay informed of the Coalition’s activities including announcements about legislation by visiting our website, FloridaConservationCoalition.org and Facebook.com/FloridaConservationCoalition.

Sincerely,

Estus Whitfield
Member, Florida Conservation Coalition

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*Estus Whitfield served as the chief environmental adviser to Governor’s Graham, Martinez and Chiles. He also served Governor Askew as assistant environmental adviser and assisted Governor Bush with the completion of the Talisman Sugar Land purchase prior to his retirement. In 2011, Estus, out of concern for Florida’s current policies, helped establish the Florida Conservation Coalition.

**Florida Wildlife Federation is proud to be an active member of the Florida Conservation Coalition.
A decade of delays in setting limits on sewage, manure and fertilizer contamination in Florida waters ended today with a ruling today by the federal court in Tallahassee. The court ruled that enforceable new limits on this pollution cannot be delayed any longer and, in fact, must go into effect in three weeks.

“Florida political and environmental leaders have been struggling for 20 years to come up with a way to stop huge green toxic algae outbreaks that plague Florida lakes and rivers,” said Earthjustice Attorney David Guest. “Today we finally turned the corner.”

The ruling was issued by U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency decided 14 years ago that limits on the pollutants that feed slime outbreaks on lakes and streams were necessary. Three years ago, EPA and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection agreed that specific pollution limits must be quickly implemented – but efforts to establish limits were met by a massive campaign by polluting industries to stop or delay the new rules.

Sewage, manure and fertilizer spur toxic algae outbreaks that cover waterways with green slime and cause rashes, breathing problems, stomach disorders, and worse. Health authorities have had to shut down drinking water plants, beaches and swimming areas. Toxic algae can kill fish, livestock and pets.

The judge agreed that the EPA’s approach – which is like a speed limit sign that gives everyone fair warning of the law -- is a good, practical and necessary. It replaces a 35-year-old Florida rule that required studies when algae outbreaks take place but did nothing to prevent them.

“Florida is disgust that gives everyone fair warning of the law -- is a good, practical and necessary. It replaces a 35-year-old Florida rule that required studies when algae outbreaks take place but did nothing to prevent them.

The court did find two technical defects in EPA’s rule, and ordered them to be fixed by May.

“Floridians are disgusted at seeing more and more lakes and rivers turn pea green and smell like sewage,” Guest said. “Today we are going to start preventing that from happening anymore.”

The public wants the slime outbreaks to stop. Several environmental groups issued a grassroots call to action in recent weeks, and, so far, more than 17,000 people have written to the White House supporting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency limits to combat the green slime which breaks out on our waterways.

After years of seeing toxic algae on Florida tourist beaches like Sanibel Island and at fishing destinations like the St. Johns River, Earthjustice filed a Clean Water Act federal lawsuit in 2008 in the Northern District of Florida on behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, St. John’s Riverkeeper, and the Sierra Club. In 2009, the EPA set numeric limits for the phosphorus and nitrogen that comes from sewage, fertilizer and manure in the water.

Earthjustice is now challenging the ineffective standards to control this pollution proposed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Like the old rules, the proposed rules only require studies when an algae outbreak takes place. No corrective action can be required until the studies are completed, a process that takes five to ten years.

Says Florida regulators haven’t protected citizens from contaminated water

February 17, 2012 - by Earthjustice
Native Bees Deserve the Buzz

The following article was written by Athena Rayne Anderson, and gives us another reason to garden for wildlife. I think it is an interesting follow-up to this publication’s recent “Decline of the Pollinators” article, which mostly dealt with honeybees. Honeybees are still declining, and the cause is not known. We need to foster and protect other pollinators, as Ms. Anderson mentions in her article. “Butterfly Gardens” and many “Wildlife Habitats” are actually “Pollinator Gardens” supporting many native pollinators.

Pat Pearson, FWF Habitat Coordinator

Did you know that every third bite of food you eat is made possible by bees?

Most people know honey bees are important for pollinating fruits and vegetables, but did you know they’re not the only bees that do this? There are a variety of fascinating and beautiful native bees that pollinate our crops and wild plants, too.

Honey bees were brought to North America by early European settlers. Most of what folks know about bees as a group was learned from honey bees. However, honey bees are very different from the majority of other bees in the world. For instance, most bees live solitary lives, rather than with relatives. Most bees don’t store large quantities of food in the form of honey. Also, most bees are gentle!

More than 4,000 species are native to the U.S. A native bee is simply one that is “from” an area. You’ve probably seen some native bees, even if you haven’t thought about it. Maybe you’ve seen bumble bees visiting blueberries in spring. Or tiny sweat bees licking perspiration from your skin in summer. What about carpenter bees, whose females tunnel into soft wood to lay their eggs?

There are also mining bees, leaf-cutter bees, alkali bees, polystere bees and squash bees, just to name a few! All depend on pollen and nectar for survival as larvae and adults. Many of these native bees are more effective pollinators of crops and wild plants on a per-bee basis than honey bees!

The number of honey bee colonies and beekeepers has been declining in the U.S. for several decades. The great news is wild native bees can do all the pollinating needed if given a chance!

But they need our help. Native bees need these three things to survive:

1. Something in bloom from early spring into autumn. Native bees do best when they always have native flowers to visit.
2. Nesting habitat. Most native bees nest in the soil, so leaving bare patches in sunny spots is key. Other native bees nest in stems and twigs. Leaving forested areas intact also helps.
3. Protection from pesticides. The chemicals used to kill crop pests kill also native pollinating bees! Finding ways to apply pesticides so they won’t harm bees can boost their numbers. Eliminating pesticide use is even better.

Visit www.pollinators.info to learn more about native bees and other pollinators, and to join the Pollinator Conservation Movement!

Athena Rayne Anderson is a University of Georgia doctoral student in ecology studying native bee pollination. She is also author of www.pollinators.info, a site dedicated to pollinator information, resources and community.

This article from: DNR’s Georgia Wild (volume 4, issue 8) which is free, monthly and focused on rare, endangered and other nongame wildlife. Nongame includes wildlife not legally trapped, fished for or hunted, plus native plants and natural habitats.
100 Days, 1000 Miles
Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition

On January 17, 2012, a 1000 mile expedition over a 100 day period was kicked off to increase public awareness and generate support for the Florida Wildlife Corridor project.

Bear biologist Joe Guthrie, conservationist Mallory Lykes Dimmitt, and photojournalist Carlton Ward Jr is trekking from the Everglades National Park toward Okefenokee National Forest in southern Georgia. The trio is traversing the wildlife habitats, watersheds and participating working farms and ranches, which comprise the Florida Wildlife Corridor opportunity area.

The team is documenting the corridor through photography, video streams, radio reports, daily updates on social media and digital networks, and a host of activities for reporters, landowners, celebrities, conservationists, politicians and other guests. Award-winning cinematographer Elam Stoltzfus is documenting the expedition to produce a film about the journey and the Florida Wildlife Corridor. For more information visit http://www.floridawildlifecorridor.org.

Stephen Harris receives The Greater Everglades Student Memorial Scholarship From The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society

We are pleased to announce that Stephen Harris is the recipient of the 14th annual scholarship for undergraduate studies, administered by the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society. As a senior at the University of Florida, Stephen is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. Stephen is a role model for other undergraduates, serving as the president of the UF Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society, volunteering his time towards wildlife fieldwork, conducting outreach and balancing an undergraduate thesis project in addition to his regular coursework. After graduation, Stephen plans to gain more experience through seasonal wildlife positions before eventually pursuing a graduate degree. Stephen’s professional aspirations center on promoting wildlife conservation. The Florida Wildlife Federation is a co-sponsor of this award, and the UF Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society is an affiliate of the FWF.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor aims to protect and restore connected landscapes throughout the Florida Peninsula to create a viable corridor from the Everglades to Georgia. The corridor addresses the fragmentation of natural landscapes and watersheds from the Everglades ecosystem north. Contributing to the fragmentation problem is the disconnect between the perceptions of Floridians, and the real need to keep natural systems connected. The Florida Wildlife Corridor is positioned to mend the perception gap through an education and awareness campaign that demonstrates the connection between the landscapes and watersheds. If we show Floridians the panthers, bears, native cultures, ranchlands and rivers and how they are all connected, then they can help us make the Florida Wildlife Corridor a reality.

Dedication Ceremony, November 16, at Crystal Springs Preserve

Crystal Springs Preserve celebrated the opening of a new Alligator Point Eco-Trail and the Wilderness Pavilion at Crystal Springs (in Pasco County) on November 16, 2011.

Cutting the ribbon for the new Alligator Point Eco Trail are Barney and Carol Jenkins Barnett, who represent Publix Super Markets Charities. Also pictured are (L-R) Karen Pate and Robert Thomas, Crystal Springs Foundation Inc.; Kim Jeffery, Nestlé Waters North America; and Tina Thomas Stewart, also Crystal Springs Foundation Inc.

Karen Pate, who received the FWF Conservation Educator of the Year Award in 2011, is the Executive Director of Crystal Springs Preserve, a 520 acre wildlife sanctuary and spring in Pasco County.

Representing FWF at the ceremony were Bob and Billye Taylor, Ann Vanek-Dasovich and E. C. Vandagrift. Bob, Ann and E. C. are members of the FWF board of directors.
Blood Mountain Wilderness - by Neal George

Florida, as beautiful as it is, is not known for its altitudinal diversity. Luckily for us in the northern reach of the state, the foothills and peaks of the Appalachian Mountains are no further than a seven hour drive. The Blue Ridge mountain range, a part of the Appalachians and enshrined in many a bluegrass lyric, starts in North Georgia. This is practically in your back yard if we are thinking on a global scale. The journey into the highlands is a straight shot via I-75 N, and ones choices of which section of the ancient Appalachians to explore is vast. My party had chosen, or rather inherited the Blood Mountain Wilderness Area. I say inherited because a close friend’s father has been making an annual pilgrimage there for several decades. After a late night stop to rest in one of the many rural towns that dot the North Georgia landscape, we made an early morning journey to the Woody Gap Recreation area. This was the starting point of the hike and offered a glimpse of the stunning views to come. After stretching and taking a last inventory of supplies our unit began the two mile trek to a camping spot on Jacob’s Knob, a rocky overlook that offers an ever crucial wind barrier. Once we finished soaking up the panoramic views of the mountain peaks crashing into the multi-hued valleys of an Appalachian fall that Florida’s humble red hills would certainly be envious of, we gathered firewood for the night. This was it. Getting back to nature, alleviating the stress of modern life. No screens, no sirens and no fast food chains in sight.

The next morning, we gathered our thoughts and gear and prepared for a roughly ten mile hike to the summit of Blood Mountain. The hike follows the Appalachian Trails’ iconic white blazes through steep switch backs down into cool meandering valleys. In these valleys one can’t help but notice a striking resemblance to Florida’s steephead ravines; this is because the ravines provided a cooler habitat than the surrounding areas and shelters more northerly species typical of the Appalachians after the retreat of glaciers during the last Ice Age. But as everyone whose ever traveled hilly terrain knows, what goes down must go up. Do not be alarmed though because you will soon find the lactic acid burn in your legs is repaid exorbitantly by the brilliant hues of the fall foliage viewed from the many rocky outcroppings along the way. The final stretch to the summit is the most strenuous but this is to be expected for the highest peak on the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail. As we reached the peak, I was stunned by sunlight playing off of the foliage and the 360 degree appreciation of the landscape that the peak allows. This vista, which casts a more immediate impression than North Florida’s subtle karstic beauty, is not the only thing that caught my eye. On top of Blood Mountain lies a stone cabin shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1934. The CCC was established as part of the New Deal under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The CCC hired young, unemployed men for various environmental tasks such as planting trees and building infrastructure in parks and rural areas. This program not only provided much needed income to Americans but it also helped foster a strong environmental ethic and appreciation for this country’s natural grandeur. This sturdy stone structure at the summit made me think about our current economic situation, the worst in this country since the CCC was formed during the Great Depression. I wondered if a program similar to the CCC could help alleviate the ever pressing unemployment problem we face today. Certainly some much needed environmental awareness could only be a positive result. President Obama has recently called for budget appropriations to set up a similar program geared towards veterans to help repair trails, remove invasive species, and other work that needs to be performed in our nations parks and wilderness areas. This news elated me and hopefully the program is available not only to veterans but any citizen who is currently unemployed.

So, as getting back outdoors always seems to do, I not only gained the calming effects of a natural setting but also came out with an unexpected idea that could benefit the country both environmentally and economically. Many programs that hire local people for conservation work are in effect in such countries as Costa Rica; these programs have brought a much needed economic boost to rural areas and I think that the United States could benefit from a similar approach. I suppose that mountains imitate lend themselves to inner meditation and the archetypal wise man on the mountain had some real world basis. Now I wonder if the working man on the mountain or any ecosystem for that matter can reach a similar calm.

We stepped off the plane and out of our 20+ hours without a breath of fresh air to a warm, clean breeze and freshly made beds constructed from a home garden. Yep, this was Maui alright – no need for air-conditioning here! As my family and I drove to our relative’s house where we would be staying for the next 15 nights, I was bombarded by the bounty of nature at our fingertips. The pure air rushed through the windows with the smell of Pacific Ocean, sugar cane rustled in the night and the stars shined brighter than I had ever seen before. It was quite an introduction to what would be an amazing two weeks spent taking in the natural beauty of a state that seemed worlds away from Tallahassee. Now don’t let me wrong, I love the lakes, rivers, springs, sinks-holes, forests and trails that North Florida has to offer, but Maui offered a vision of just how much more special these places could be with good stewardship.

Through our two weeks in Maui we took advantage of the multitude of activities offered by the beautiful island. Each day started by waking on a screened-in porch where I slept and sampling yet another of the 100 or so varieties of avocado the Hawaiian Islands had to offer. We then had to decide as a group which of the many beaches we wanted to visit or which part of a mountain we want to hike up. The best part about these decisions was that no matter where we went, we would be met by clean air, clear water and citizens doing everything in their power to keep their island as clean as possible.

Some of the most striking moments of our trip came on a three day visit to Hana on the eastern shores of Maui. Though we were staying out of the main towns, Hana is in an even more isolated region and faces directly out towards the Pacific for 2,100 unimpeded miles to California. We ‘camped’ in bare-bones cabins in a state park with a view of the ocean and a two minute walk through the trees to cliffs it lapped against. On our final morning there, with the guidance of a friend and seasoned camper there, we jumped off the cliffs into the 30-foot deep water and snorkelled down the coastline to Blacksand Beach which is composed of many small, rounded black volcanic rocks. On the way, we saw a variety of fish, but as we were swimming in towards the beach I saw something distinctly different out of the corner of my eye. A giant sea turtle! This magnificent creature is endangered but has made a recovery throughout the Hawaiian Islands thanks to protective measures. We swam with the turtle for a few minutes as it gracefully glided through the ocean before turning towards the beach to finish our swim.

All of these unforgettable moments that make this Hawaiian island what it is would not have been possible without a commitment to preserving the island’s natural environment. As we see the increasing encroachment of development throughout Florida, we as conservationists must continue to stress how important our environment is to what makes Florida, Florida. Our natural treasures not only drive tourism and the economy throughout the state, but also are the true heart and soul of Florida.
Florida Wildlife Federation Launches 6th Annual “Green” Car Sweepstakes
By Claudia Farren

The Federation’s 2012 Sixth Annual “Green” Car Sweepstakes gets under way in March with an outstanding choice of four fuel-efficient automobiles from which the grand prize winner may choose.

This year we are offering the Fusion Hybrid (185 hp/130 lb-ft), with its brand new aerodynamic, sleek design. Ditching its 2.5-liter engine for a smaller 2.0-liter Atkinson-cycle four-cylinder, it’s anticipated to deliver 47 city/44 highway mpg. Also, lighter, more powerful lithium-ion batteries replace the previous nickel-metal hydride batteries, increasing the maximum speed under electric-only power from 47 mph to 62 mph. Regenerative braking recovers more than 90 percent of kinetic energy and sends it back to the battery pack to be stored for later use.

“It is in-city driving where the Fusion Hybrid excels. At lower speeds, the Fusion Hybrid can travel in electric mode. When the gas engine does kick in, at higher speeds or when passing or merging, the transition is seamless.” – Ford.com

The Grand Prize winner in the 2012 sweepstakes will also be able to choose between the Volkswagen Passat TDI Clean Diesel, named 2012 Motor Trend Car of the Year; the Toyota Prius Hybrid, the world’s most popular hybrid car; and the Honda Civic Hybrid, with its excellent five passenger space, good drivability and improved fuel economy.

Since not everyone who wishes to support the Federation through this program needs a new car, the 2012 winner can also choose to receive $25,000 in cash.

The “Green” Car Sweepstakes, in conjunction with the Federation’s 22nd Annual Boating Sweepstakes, which launches in April, represents one of the most important fundraising programs for the Florida Wildlife Federation. Proceeds are used exclusively in Florida in support of initiatives such as clean air and water programs, wetlands protection, public land acquisition and stewardship of our unique fish and wildlife resources.

“As Floridians, we understand how vulnerable our state’s unique wildlife and habitats are to a changing climate and sea-level rise. If you believe, as we do, that people benefit from sustainable nature-based outdoor recreation, and that our state’s future will be brighter with fish and wildlife habitats intact and flourishing, please support the Green Car Sweepstakes,” said Manley Fuller, President of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

Visit www.fwfonline.org for details.

2011 Sweepstakes Winners

Mrs. Sandra Flood, of Aventura, Florida, winner of the Fifth Annual “Green” Car Sweepstakes, receiving her Grand Prize certificate from Ned Stone, FWF Southern Regional Director.

Mr. Robert Konen, of St. Augustine, Florida, winner of the 21st Annual Boating Sweepstakes, being awarded his Grand Prize certificate from Sarah Owen Gledhill, FWF NE Florida Planning Advocate, at FWF’s NE Florida Office.

Florida Wildlife Federation asks:

Do you want to make sure that your children and grandchildren have a healthy environment and can enjoy quality outdoor recreation in Florida?

Do you want to ensure our lands and waters are conserved and available for resource-based public recreation?

If you agree that we must protect the future of well managed outdoor recreation by acquiring public conservation lands, encouraging private lands conservation, and restoring habitats and populations of fish and wildlife through sound management, then we would like you to become a member of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

By joining us, you will become part of a dynamic, statewide organization with the goal of conserving Florida’s fish, wildlife, water and plant life in the face of rapid loss of habitat statewide. It is only with the financial support of our members that we may continue to pursue these goals. Please join or donate today!

We need your support to conserve Florida’s wildlife and habitat for today and the future!

The Florida Wildlife Federation Inc. is a 501 c(3), tax-exempt, non-profit corporation, working for the protection, enjoyment and wise use of Florida’s fish and wildlife and other natural resources. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. To contact FWF headquarters office, call (850) 656-7113. Visit FWF’s website at www.fwfonline.org

Conservation Calendar

March 9, 2012
Legislative Session ends

March 23-25
FWF Board of Directors meeting in Winter Garden
Contact dhines@fwfonline.org for more information

March 31
13th Annual Black Bear Festival in Umatilla. See page 5 for further information

June 15-17
FWF 75th Annual Meeting and Conservation Awards Banquet.
Contact dhines@fwfonline.org