



# Florida Fish & Wildlife News

Volume 34, Issue 4  
Fall 2020

Florida Wildlife Federation – *Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation*

## *New Look— Still Keeping the Wild in Florida*



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# Chair's Message

Joe Atterbury

## Why is the Florida Wildlife Federation Non-partisan?

I am not sure whether this article will appear before or after our contentious national election, but for purposes of this discussion, it makes no difference.

Our organization has been around since 1936. First, we are non-partisan because our bylaws say so. There is also a deep understanding within the organization that the appreciation of natural areas and wildlife is not confined to one political perspective. The board of the Florida Wildlife Federation, and its members and supporters, are comprised of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and those who may not be engaged in the political process at all. Within the very recent past, our board included a Democratic gubernatorial hopeful and a Republican United States Congressman who was, and still is, passionate about the environment and who co-authored the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA). CBRA encourages the conservation of hurricane-prone, biologically rich, coastal barriers by restricting federal expenditures that encourage development, such as federal flood insurance. The point is this: can anyone tell what party the person canoeing down the Suwannee or Wekiva River belongs to? How about the guy hurling a sand flea at the pompano hiding past the second break at Coral Cove Park? And the woman enjoying a morning hike in Riverbend Park? The Federation's mission is to conserve Florida's wildlife, habitat and natural resources through education, advocacy, and science-based stewardship. Wildlife cannot survive where wetlands have been destroyed, water is polluted, or



Photographer: Melissa Herrick Location: Hobe Mountain Trail at Jonathan Dickinson State Park

healthy habitats otherwise have been degraded.

People who appreciate clean air, water, and public access to natural areas are not confined to one political persuasion. Nor are those who believe that we must continue to protect more natural areas for those who come after us. Until very recently that goal was consistently supported by the Legislature and governors of both parties. While our activities in natural areas may be solitary or in small groups, together there is strength in numbers.

We encourage those who support the objectives of the Florida Wildlife Federation to support candidates and policy-makers who will best assist us in achieving those goals.



### Florida Fish & Wildlife News

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I enjoyed being able to photograph this beautiful red-shouldered hawk perched on a water depth gauge.

Photographer: Julio Cesar Rodriguez  
Location: Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park  
Animal: Red Shouldered Hawk

#### Contact Information

Tallahassee Mailing Address  
PO Box 6870  
Tallahassee, Florida 32314  
news@fwfonline.org

Tallahassee Street Address  
2545 Blairstone Pines Dr  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
850-656-7113

Naples Office  
4851 Tamiami Trail N.,  
Suite 255  
Naples, Florida 34103  
239-302-1767 (office)  
meredithb@fwfonline.org

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#### Editors

Danny Shapiro & Preston T. Robertson

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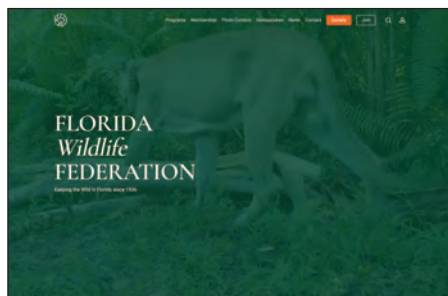
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## We Rebranded!

We are so excited to share the officially rebranded Florida Wildlife Federation. At FWF, we've been "Keeping the Wild in Florida since 1936"... but now we have a more modern look!

Our new logo and website were created to better emphasize our conservation efforts, including saving the endangered Florida Panther.



To learn more about our work, and to donate, please visit <https://floridawildlifefederation.org/>.

Make sure to Like and Follow our social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for more updates.

As always, thank you for caring about Florida's wildlife!



## FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S *Wild Florida Sweepstakes*

### Play the Wild Florida Sweepstakes Today and Win \$20,000 in Cash!

Five Second Prize Winners will Receive a  
\$50 Bass Pro Shop Gift Card.



**How to Enter:** Ticket contributions are \$5 each. Six tickets for \$25, 15 for \$50, 35 for \$100, and 50 for \$125 (the best value). Watch for your sweepstakes tickets in the mail.

For more information, read the Wild Florida Flyer and the Official Rules at our website, [www.floridawildlifefederation.org](http://www.floridawildlifefederation.org). To enter, click "Sweepstakes" at the top of our webpage. If you would like a set of tickets mailed to you, send an email to FWF at [sweeps@fwfonline.org](mailto:sweeps@fwfonline.org) or call our toll-free number (800) 656-3015. Please provide your full name and complete mailing address to receive a packet of tickets.

By playing the sweepstakes you help FWF advocate in critical areas such as clean water, the preservation of the Florida panther and the sustainability of species like the Florida black bear.

Thanks for supporting the Florida Wildlife Federation!

## FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S LOU KELLENBERGER 2020 PHOTO CONTEST

### Calling All Florida Photographers!

The Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to announce the sixth year of the Lou Kellenberger FWF Photo Contest. The Contest celebrates the enjoyment of taking photos in Florida's great outdoors and promotes FWF's mission to encourage citizens to participate in sustainable outdoor recreation. Enter your most compelling nature images and photos of Florida today at [www.snappiephoto.com](http://www.snappiephoto.com). Entries will be taken from now until December 31, 2020.

Entry donations are \$5 for one photo, \$10 for 3 photos, and \$25 for 7 photos. One Overall Contest winner will be selected for the First Prize of \$300, a Second Prize winner will receive a Kindle Fire tablet, and the kids' contest winner will receive an outdoor backpack. Only digitally uploaded images may be entered. Judging will follow the closing date of December 31, 2020.

Visit [www.snappiephoto.com](http://www.snappiephoto.com) to get started. Contact FWF at (850) 656-7113 for more information.



# Dear Federation Members and Supporters:

**H**ope all are being safe and doing well. Summer is winding down even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. With the general election season coming to an end, we must all remember that we share the same state no matter our political affiliation and should strive to leave it beautiful and sustainable for the next generation.

On par with the COVID issue, the climate has been a big story this year. Please note that the **climate is different than our day to day weather. The climate is our weather over a long period of time.** As evidenced by past years, our climate is changing, and not for the better.

The 2020 storm season has set records. There have been 23 named storms as of this writing, and 20 of these storms set the record for developing early. As to September storms that are so severe they merit names, we have had 10, the most in recorded history. Eight was the previous record, which occurred in 2002, 2007 and 2010. You can clearly see the trend. Indeed, this is exactly what scientists predicted as the planet warms due to greenhouse gas emissions.

Here in Florida, **Hurricane Sally** dumped up to 24 inches of rain on parts of the Panhandle, causing flooding and terrible structural damage. Pensacola and Escambia County incurred upwards of \$30 million in damage and left 500,000 people without power.

As Florida's climate turns more tropical, we must act not only to mitigate against rising seas and devastating storms but put into place measures to decrease the chance of an even more horrific future. We can do that by

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*“ Our environmental education program is growing, and each of us can be more aware of our connection with Nature. I have found that as you educate yourself on the wonders of the woods and waters of Florida, you grow more dedicated to preserving them. ”*

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**decreasing our use of energy sources that cause heat to be trapped in our atmosphere.**

Simultaneously to our stormy weather in the South, the western United States is burning. **Wildfires** due to drought, exceedingly high temperatures and likely the lack of the use of prescribed fire, have created conditions that have burned over 3.7 million acres in 10 western states. That is an area larger than the entire state of Connecticut.

Both hurricanes and massive wildfires harm not only our property and disrupt our lives, they cause serious economic woes. Our wildlife and fisheries also are negatively impacted as habitats are destroyed and waterways polluted.

The Legislatures' **toll roads** plan, which would put taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars and spread sprawl into the remaining rural areas of the peninsula, is still alive. Please let the Governor and our elected leaders know your opinion about this important issue (see page 11) and thank you to all who voiced your opinions! That is how democracy works.

Our Water and Land Legacy Amendment lawsuit continues. Voters overwhelmingly approved, this Constitutional amendment to fund the Florida Forever program and other conservation initiatives but the Legislature has not done the will of the people. We hope for some progress in this case by the end of the year.

FWF is also attempting to facilitate the restoration of the Apalachicola Bay and River by changing the federal governments' water control manual to recognize the impact water flow has on fish and wildlife, including oysters, in that region. We are also promoting the **Conservation Collier Initiative** to save habitats in Southwest Florida.

We have updated our website and logo, and will be moving to expand our outreach in the days to



come. Please take a look at the new home page – [www.floridawildlife.federation.org](http://www.floridawildlife.federation.org).

Lastly, I want to personally thank our outgoing Board Chair, Dr. Jay Exum, for all his efforts on behalf of the Federation. His leadership and guidance of the Board has been exemplary, and we are in a much stronger position thanks to his undertaking this responsibility. I also look forward to working with incoming Board Chair Joe Atterbury. Mr. Atterbury

is another selfless and dedicated conservationist who believes we can make a positive difference for the environment and our quality of life in Florida.

As we continue our efforts, many thanks to all who support the Federation. We could not do it without you.

May you enjoy a pleasant and safe winter.

*Quinn T. Robertson*



Animal: Egret and Cypress Photographer: Alfredo Torres Location: Big Cypress National Preserve

## FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

by Marney Richards

**1.** This large, white bird has black-tipped wings spanning as much as 9 feet.



**2.** Keep your distance if you see an animal the size of a house cat with short legs, bushy tail and stripes along the body.



**3.** You can grow these large, leafy green veggies easily in the cooler seasons in Florida.

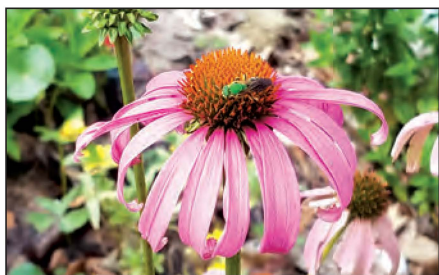


See page 13 for answers and more information.



## Schoolyard Habitats

In late summer, the garden in a small corner of a local school campus is teeming with life. Caterpillars, butterflies, native bees, other insect pollinators, and even hummingbirds visit the garden to find food, water, shelter and places to raise young. The garden provides an urban wildlife habitat for many species of plants, animals, insects and birds.



Bee on a coneflower

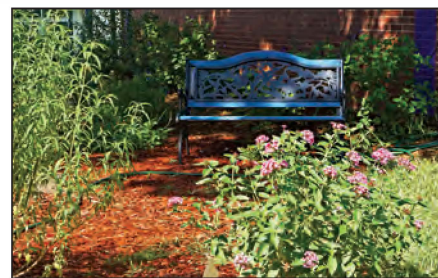
Hartsfield Elementary School in Tallahassee hasn't always had a thriving garden. Only a year ago, the space was a sparsely grassed patch with compacted soil trod on by many generations of students' feet. Last year the school started considering ways to move toward more sustainability and decided to increase biodiversity by building a pollinator garden. Partnering with FWF staff, Hartsfield began working on becoming a certified Eco-School (<https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Framework/About>) and chose the Schoolyard Habitat (<https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Create/Schoolyards>) pathway as their first project. A team of teachers, students, staff and volunteers came together, selected a site and

began an audit of the location. Students and teachers learned the history of their school site from the principal and received help from county extension agents with soil analysis and garden planning. Local native plant nurseries provided guidance on native plants, making sure to include both caterpillar host and nectar plants for butterflies and other pollinators.

Garden construction started on a chilly, drizzly day in November. Students, teachers, administration, extension agents, Master Gardeners, community volunteers and FWF staff hauled compost, dug holes, planted and watered perennials and added mulch. More data was collected for the Eco-School project, with the team noting weather conditions, and existing plants and wildlife in the area.

Through the winter, plants were watered as needed, more mulch was added, and the team watched and waited. By the early spring, there were welcome signs of growth. When the school closed in mid-March due to the COVID pandemic, teachers, staff and volunteers continued to tend the garden. The maintenance staff constructed a beautiful path and kept the garden watered. Through spring and summer, perennials thrived. Butterflies, native bees and other pollinators inhabited the garden. The life cycles of monarch and black swallowtail butterflies were recorded to show

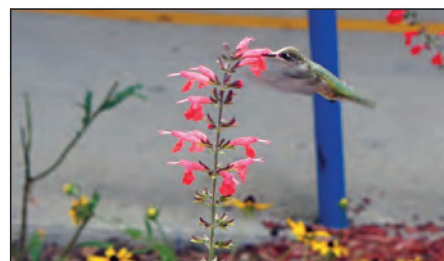
to students at home. Even ruby-throated hummingbirds came to the garden to feed on blooming perennials!



A spot for children to enjoy the garden.

Hartsfield School certified the pollinator garden as a Schoolyard Habitat this fall. The habitat provides an outdoor classroom: a place to watch and learn about the natural world. Students can learn about seeds and plants, insects, birds, amphibians, their life cycles and how they interact. The garden is also a place to pause and breathe in a peaceful outdoor space.

Outdoor lessons in science, math and language arts will engage students in new ways. Hartsfield teachers and students will also use this unique habitat to teach the concept of the "butterfly effect" – that small change can make a big difference.



Hummingbird feeding





*Before - Students begin work on the garden.*



*After - Building/Maintenance Supervisor overlooks the new garden path.*



## *Featured Animal*

### **Florida Native – Marsh Rabbit** (*Sylvilagus palustris*)

Living on coasts and in the swamps of the Southeastern United States, the marsh rabbit resides near water. Somewhat similar in appearance to the Eastern cottontail rabbit, this species possesses smaller ears, legs and tail. Weighing only 2.5 pounds at full growth, and reaching about 17 inches long, it has dark or brownish-red fur and a lighter colored belly. Unlike cottontails, this rabbit has a brownish grey underside to its tail (not white). They produce young year-round, with females being able to have up to 20 annually! Marsh rabbits need a lot of youngsters because a lot of other animals eat them! Strictly herbivores, these little rabbits eat leaves and plant bulbs, including cattails and water hyacinth. Usually active at night, they are excellent swimmers and will hide from predators submerged with only eyes and noses exposed and with their ears laid back.



*Animal: Marsh Rabbit Photographer: Barbara Woodmansee*





## Collier County Takes Steps to Make Changes to Landmark Growth Plans

The beauty of old Florida - lush grasslands, whimsical cypress forests, and crystal waters of the Everglades not only serve to remind us of Florida's natural wonders but are also vital in protecting Florida's drinking water sources and storing floodwaters. They are also among the most productive ecosystems in the world and support a wide variety of plant and animal species, including the endangered Florida panther. Collier County is lucky to have vast acreages of these treasured landscapes in the eastern portion of the County. But for decades, Collier County has struggled with how to balance the need to preserve these natural landscapes with private property rights and anticipated development. In fact, the Florida Wildlife Federation's (FWF) Southwest office opened its doors with the intent to protect this region, known as the Western Everglades, from unchecked growth, noting much of the County's eastern wetlands and wildlife habitats are private lands.

Since it is not practical for all private lands that have natural resource value to be acquired by public agencies, and it has been shown that we cannot rely solely



Photographer: Constance Mier Location: Chokoloskee Bay, Everglades National Park

on federal regulations (like the Clean Water Act or the Endangered Species Act) to protect resources on private lands, FWF took action. In 1977, we sued the County for not adequately protecting natural resources. From this litigation, the County was required to create a landmark growth plan called the **Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay (RLSAO)**. This is a landowner incentive program that provides a mechanism to meet the public goals of conserving natural resources on private lands, while maintaining the landowners' property rights.

The RLSAO provides compensation to landowners if they are willing to remove land uses to better protect natural resources and help retain ranches and farms. The landowner, in turn, receives development credits

that can be used to entitle compact, rural mixed-use, development that is directed away from the most valuable natural resources. With landowner participation in the program, the County can conserve the most environmentally valuable land, including large, connected wetland systems and expansive habitat for state and federally listed endangered species, like

the Florida panther.

A review of the RLSAO showed that the program was mostly successful – in fact, **the program has already protected over 55,000 acres of wetlands and panther habitats using no tax dollars.** However, the review brought to light several faults in the program that create imbalances, such as inadequate protections for ranches and farms that could be converted into sprawling rooftops under the underlying zoning. In response, the County considered several revised policy recommendations to improve the program, including adding stronger incentives to protect up to 40,000 acres of ranches and farms from conversion to sprawling development. These recommendations were reviewed by a group of well-respected



panther experts who concluded that the recommendations, while not their ideal scenario, represented an enhancement to panther conservation over the existing RLSAO.

The RLSAO recommendations, however, still have a long process ahead and FWF will continue to advocate for necessary changes that will help effectuate landscape level preservation on private lands across the region.

### Land Preservation in the Wake of Expanding Growth

More than 300,000 people have moved to Florida since 2015, and it is predicted that Florida will continue growing by more than 300,000 people each year until at least 2024. An increasing human population means there will be an



Photographer: Barbara Richie Location: Flamingo Campground, Everglades National Park

increased demand for drinking water, increased pollution in our waterways, reduced wildlife habitat, and an increased demand for outdoor spaces to recreate. Water is essential and land preservation has a direct benefit to protecting Florida's water resources. Wetlands acts as Nature's kidneys by naturally cleaning pollutants from water and native habitats provide

ecosystems that support a wide variety of birds and other wildlife.

**Protecting land is an investment in Florida's future** and we have many tools available to help effectuate landscape scale land preservation. The Florida Forever Program and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program provide a statewide mechanism to protect valuable lands. But there are also programs that local

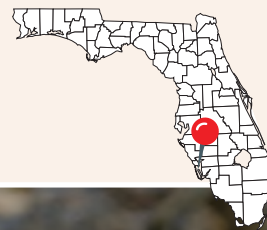
governments can participate in. In Southwest Florida, both Lee County and Collier County have land conservation programs (Conservation 20/20 in Lee County and Conservation Collier in Collier County). FWF actively supports conservation programs and safeguarding remarkable natural landscapes remains a top priority.



## Featured Natural Area

### Estero Bay Preserve State Park

At approximately 10,000 acres, Lee County's Estero Bay Preserve State Park is located at the site of the first state-recognized aquatic preserve, created in 1966. The Park protects a very important estuary from pollution and provides wonderful outdoor recreational opportunities. Visitors can enjoy geocaching, biking and hiking on the twelve miles of trails and all manner of native wildlife can be viewed. Bald eagles, black-necked stilts, American oystercatchers, and a plethora of other bird species use this area, as do gopher tortoises. The Park consists of uplands, salt marshes and mangrove wetlands, providing a wealth of habitats. Location: 3800 Corkscrew Rd., Estero, FL 33928, phone 239-992-0311.



Animal: American Oystercatcher Photographer: Suzanne Spahn



## Red Maple – a Florida Native Tree

**T**he forests of Florida are very diverse. There are many different factors that influence them such as fires, hurricanes, varying soil types, insects and disease and the list goes on. Only a few trees grow over much of the state. Some widespread species includes our cabbage palm as well as live oak and bald cypress. Another one that grows over most of Florida, except the very southern portion, is the red maple (*Acer rubrum*).

Probably the most striking quality of this tree is its consistent display of red color. This appropriately named red maple begins the year by displaying clusters of small red flowers as early as February. This is followed by the less common occurrence of developing a fruit that matures in the spring. These double samurai sword looking seeds are also red in color. Many birds and squirrels are fond of these seeds. Through the summer the leaves are green, but the leaf stalk or petiole is red. Finally, in fall, the red maples' leaves often turn a consistent and striking scarlet red and/or yellow and orange.

The bark of the red maple is not red but instead is smooth and light gray on young trees, becoming darker and breaking up into long, fine scaly plates with age.

Red maple grows over much of eastern U.S. and into Canada. In many parts of its range it is both an upland and wetland species. In natural settings in Florida, red maple grows almost exclusively in wetlands. Our hot weather can be too much for this delicate tree, so they need



*Red maple in fall glory by Stan Rosenthal*

the moisture. The other main reason is that red maple's thin bark and shallow root system are easily damaged by fire.

Besides the fruit providing food, red maple leaves and twigs are a desirable deer and rabbit food. So much so that maple reproduction may be almost completely suppressed in areas of excessive deer populations.

Yellow-bellied sapsuckers use red maple, and unfortunately, if heavily used, they can cause mortality.

Speaking of bird food, many different insects feed on red maple, but probably none of them kill

healthy trees. They can reduce vigor and growth leaving the tree more weakened. Susceptibility to insect attack is illustrated by a recent study. Of 40 tree species investigated, red maple had the highest percentage (79 percent) of insect attacks. This is a great moment for me to make a point. If your tree is healthy, you can look at this high insect preference as a way to get free and abundant bird food. The idea of a sterile, insect-free landscape runs counter to a healthy ecosystem.

Finally, pollination ecologists recognize red maple as attracting large numbers of native bees.

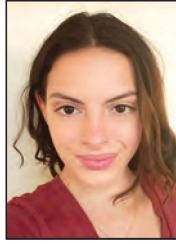
While I have not seen it in Florida, red maple is suitable for making maple syrup. The hard maples – sugar and black maple – are principally used for syrup production. Interestingly, in a study where red maple sap and syrup were compared with sugar maple, it was found to be equal in sweetness, flavor and quality.

If you plant a red maple you want to consider genetics. As might be expected from its wide range, red maple shows great variation in height, cold hardiness, straightness, time of flushing, onset of dormancy, and other traits. I found this out when a friend gave me a red maple with origins from South Florida. Here in Tallahassee it constantly leaves out in February, unlike the red maples here that come on at a later date. Most years the leaves freeze and fall off. The tree then resprouts more leaves at a later date. It survives, but does not thrive.



# Stop the M-CORES Toll Roads

The Legislature's Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance, also known as M-CORES, proposes to add three major new toll roads to the Florida Turnpike System. Many are against M-CORES for numerous valid reasons. **No study supports the claim that these new roads are necessary or would benefit the areas, and there is no cost estimate or evidence that the roads will pay for themselves. Another criticism of M-CORES is the environmental impact the project would have on Florida's wildlife.**



Allison Ramos

These roads would destroy some of Florida's last remaining natural land. The toll roads and the development that would occur in the surrounding areas would directly impact native species by destroying critical habitats and increasing roadkill. The Florida panther is an endangered species with only 5% of its original habitat remaining. 15 of the 18 deaths of panthers this year occurred due to vehicle collisions, making the panther one of many species whose existence would be threatened by the construction of these roadways.

Protecting Florida wildlife is essential to Floridians' quality of life. We should not destroy habitats and develop over nature for a project that has yet to demonstrate a true purpose. Instead, we should focus on saving Florida's natural land and enjoying its beauty.

Corredores de usos múltiples de importancia económica regional, también conocidos como M-CORES, propone agregar tres nuevas carreteras de peaje importantes al sistema de autopistas de peaje de Florida. Los críticos están en contra de M-CORES por numerosas razones. Ningún estudio respalda la afirmación de que estas nuevas carreteras son necesarias o beneficiarían a las áreas; y no hay estimaciones de costos ni pruebas de que las carreteras se paguen por sí mismas. Otra crítica a M-CORES es el impacto ambiental que el proyecto tendría en la vida silvestre de Florida.

Estos caminos destruirían algunas de las últimas tierras naturales que quedan en Florida. Las carreteras de peaje y el desarrollo que ocurriría en las áreas circundantes impactarían directamente en la vida silvestre de Florida al destruir hábitats críticos y aumentaría los atropellos. La pantera de Florida es una especie en peligro de extinción con solo el 5% de su hábitat original restante. 15 de las 18 muertes de panteras este año ocurrieron debido a atropellos por vehículos, por lo que la pantera es una de las muchas especies cuya existencia estaría amenazada por la construcción de M-CORES.

La protección de la vida silvestre de Florida es esencial para la calidad de vida de los floridianos. No debemos destruir hábitats y desarrollar a costa de la naturaleza para un proyecto que aún tiene que demostrar un verdadero propósito. En cambio, deberíamos centrarnos en salvar la tierra natural de Florida y disfrutar de su belleza.

**TELL  
THEM**



**TOLL  
ROADS!**

## Please Contact Our Elected Leaders!

Tell our elected leaders not to waste money on three unneeded toll roads proposed to be built through the last remaining rural parts of the Florida Peninsula. These toll roads will bring sprawl and further degrade water quality and habitats and may well spell the end for the Florida panther.

### Please contact:

Governor Ron DeSantis: 850-717-9337, [governorron.desantis@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:governorron.desantis@eog.myflorida.com)

Senator Wilton Simpson: 352-688-5077, [simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov)

Representative Chris Sprowls: 727-793-2810, [chris.sprowls@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:chris.sprowls@myfloridahouse.gov)

*Thank You!*

# Invasive Lizards in Florida – Tegus

**T**he tegu lizard is now at home in South Florida and spreading northward as the climate warms. There are three types of this exotic reptile in the Sunshine State, the Argentine black and white tegu, the gold tegu and the red tegu. **All of them pose a threat to native wildlife and habitats.**

The **black and white tegu** grows up to four feet long and has black and white banding along its tail. Babies have green on their heads which fade after a few months. This lizard has established breeding populations in Miami-Dade, Charlotte, Hillsborough and St. Lucie Counties.

The **golden tegu** grows up to three feet long and has black and gold stripes down its body. The **red tegu** can reach four and a half feet in length, and the animals are “jowly.” These two tegus are seemingly not as abundant as the black and whites.

All three tegus are native to Central and South America and likely found their way to Florida’s landscape as unwanted pets. They consume fruits, vegetables, dog and



Animal: Black and white tegu Photos by FWC



cat food and smaller lizards. Sadly, they also pose a significant threat to the eggs of native species. They dig into alligator nests and consume the eggs and do the same for our turtles. Birds’ nests are raided and even gopher tortoise eggs and

hatchlings may be at risk.

All tegus spend most of their time on land and may be seen sunbathing on roadsides. They can also swim and may submerge themselves. When it gets cold, they hide in excavated burrows as their temperatures, like all reptiles, are regulated by the outside air.

Having few natural predators in North America, female tegus reproduce after they reach two years of age and can produce up to 35 eggs per year. The baby tegus emerge after about 60 days. These reptiles can live up to 20 years.

All of our native habitats and their native inhabitants are impacted by species humans have imported, some more than others. Tegus are a serious threat, and it is now illegal to own one as a personal pet.

If you see a tegu, please let the appropriate authorities know. You can call **1-888-483-4681** (the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Exotic Species Hotline).

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Florida Wildlife Federation whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

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*The Federation Thanks You for Your Thoughtful Contributions. We Express Our Sympathy to Family and Friends of those Who have Passed Away.*



Plant: American Lotus    Photographer: Karl Havens  
Location: Gainesville



Plant: Wild sunflowers    Photographer: Brian Kamprath  
Location: Lake Jesup Conservation Area

## Answers to **FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids'** Quiz

**1.** The American white pelican, one of the largest birds in North America, is a winter visitor to Florida. Unlike our year-round brown pelicans, white pelicans don't dive for their food. While floating on the surface, they reach under the water and scoop up fish. White pelicans spend summers on lakes in the Northern US and Canada.

**2.** The striped skunk has stripes along the body, while the Eastern spotted skunk has horizontal and vertical stripes and spots. Both skunks live in Florida in fields and pastures, as well as residential areas. Skunks are usually active at night and eat a diet of small mammals, insects, bird eggs, and amphibians, as well as roots, seeds, and fruit. A skunk's most effective defense against predators is a pungent, oily spray from scent glands..

**3.** Mustard greens are some of the easiest greens to grow in Florida. They can take some heat, but cooler nights help develop their best flavor. Large varieties like Giant Red and Southern Giant Curled need plenty of space around each plant.

## How Did You Do, Florida Kid?

# Jack Stanley Wanted the Ocklawaha River to Flow Free

**R**obert Jackson “Jack” Stanley, a former Florida Wildlife Federation Board Chair, was an avid fisherman and nature lover. He and his wife Linda Stanley used to spend hours on a canoe, floating along the Ocklawaha River while not making a sound - they would listen to the splashing of the paddles and the birds singing. “Nature was just a part of who he was,” Linda says.

A native Floridian, Jack lived in Salt Springs with his grandparents for some time when he was growing up. His grandfather, Homer Clause, nurtured his admiration of nature and animals, raising horses and hunting fox in the forest. Linda relates Jack’s ability as a superior birder.

At age 59, Jack passed away before he saw a free-flowing Ocklawaha River, a river unencumbered by the dam that was built for the misguided Cross Florida Barge Canal. His fondest wish was for Marjorie Harris



*The Ocklawaha River*

Carr, Founder of the Florida Defenders of the Environment and an activist responsible for halting the Canal project, to be able to restore the river. After she passed, he chuckled about strapping a piece of dynamite to himself and taking the Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam down in his final moments.

Jack, like scientists across the state, knew that reconnecting the St. Johns, Ocklawaha and Silver River would bring back migratory fish such as striped bass, channel catfish, American shad and American eels.

Ed Lowe, Director of Environmental Sciences and then

Chief Scientist at the St. Johns River Water Management District from 1984 to 2015, notes that the dam removal would reunite four ecosystems: Silver Springs, the Ocklawaha River, the Lower St. Johns River, and the coastal Atlantic Ocean of the southeastern United States. “There was once a free connection among these systems,” Lowe says. “That

connection promoted the development of rich populations of fish and shellfish.” Economically significant fisheries, such as those for American eel, striped bass, and American shad, were supported by this unified ecosystem. The Rodman/Kirkpatrick dam severed this vital migratory pathway and caused regional declines in fish and shellfish populations.

Dr. Robert Knight, Executive Director of the Florida Springs Institute, has been studying wetlands and the Silver River since the ‘70s. He notes that Silver Springs has lost



*The contentious dam that has blocked a free-flowing river since the 1960's.*



the historic fish that once made it what Disney World is to Florida today. Tourists would come from as far away as Maine and Europe in the '60s and '70s to see the beautiful crystal-clear water and channel catfish. Currently, the river is being overtaken by exotic tilapia. Silver Springs' heartbeat is slowing down - it is dying. "Silver can be restored," Dr. Knight says. "The necessary step is to remove that dam and restore the Ocklawaha River.



*The Ocklawaha River*

Retired USGS fish biologist Ken Sulak explains, "After the Cross Florida Barge Canal project was halted, the impoundment behind the dam evolved into a largemouth bass sport fishing area. In the early years, bass fishing in the impoundment peaked, contributing significantly to the local economy. However, as is typical in the evolution of artificial impoundments, once carrying capacity is reached, maximum fish size decreases over time. Today, the

fishery has declined. Now, trophy bass are more frequently caught by anglers using the St. Johns River proper. **The reservoir is choked with exotic vegetation and requires constant manipulation to avoid fish kills.**"

Fortunately, it won't take someone as courageous as Jack Stanley to create a free-flowing Ocklawaha with a stick of dynamite. Since the 1990s, the consensus approach with most federal and state agencies and conservation organizations has been partial restoration, removing a portion of the earthen dam along the natural

riverbed on the west end of the spillway. Plans leave the Rodman Park docks, ramps and amenities in place. The current FDEP Greenway Plan approved in 2018 states, "if funds are made available and permits are issued, it is the intent of FDEP to undertake this restoration."

Before Jack passed away, Linda promised him that she would do the best she could do for conservation. She serves on the Florida Wildlife Federation Board, and has advocated for the health of springs. Jack believed in never giving up on what you think is right. We agree. With the 50th Anniversary of the halting of the Cross Florida Barge Canal in January 2021 and the Rodman Dam past its life expectancy, **it is time to let the wild and endangered Ocklawaha River flow freely again.**

Gaby Eseverri

[gabyeseverri@gmail.com](mailto:gabyeseverri@gmail.com)



*Stagnation in the man-made Rodman Reservoir results in large floating vegetative mats.*



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## Florida Wildlife Federation

P.O. Box 6870

Tallahassee, Florida 32314-6870

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Animal: Great Blue Heron   Location: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge   Photographer: Richard Higgins



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