



# Florida Fish & Wildlife News

Volume 35, Issue 1  
Winter 2021

Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

## *Conserving Natural Florida*

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# Chair's Message

Joe Atterbury

## Happy New Year 2021!

I hope this message finds us in a much better year after 2020's series of calamities.

As the 2021 Florida Legislature will commence in March, I ask that you please refocus on a critical economic and environmental issue facing our state: the planned toll roads.

In 2019, the Florida Legislature authorized three task force committees to submit reports on three new superhighways, the construction of which would begin no later than December 2022. These toll roads were approved in the last days of that Session.

So where do we stand now that the reports have been completed? Now that the state has spent considerable time and tax dollars to make an assessment on the need for these roads? For the environmental consequences of this project? For the financial repercussions?

Each of the reports summarized that the committees' "did not reach a conclusion there was a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor (a euphemism for putting in new asphalt where none existed previously), or modification of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose." In other words, these massive toll roads are not needed.

Importantly, there were no studies presented as to environmental consequences, as to financial soundness, or even a sketch as to just where these new superhighways would be built. One might think a review of these studies would cause our elected leaders to reconsider the wisdom of this undertaking which, at three hundred and thirty miles, would be one of the largest new

highway projects in the nation.

In spite of an ongoing budget shortfall, our state government (there is no federal monetary assistance) continues to spend millions, and set aside millions more, in preparation for the construction of this project, which is to begin less than two years from now. In other words, let's build first, and deliberate later.

This situation reminds me of the trial in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*:

"Now," said the King, "I will read my verdict."

"No, No!" cried the Queen;

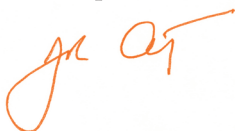
"Sentencing first, verdict afterwards."

Please do not think that three inconclusive reports will cause the demise of these misguided toll roads. This boondoggle has not yet been consigned to the scrap heap of history as was case of the thirty-nine square mile Miami Jetport project, which was to be constructed in the middle of the Everglades. Or the Cross Florida barge canal debacle which expended tremendous public financial resources until finally stopped.

We need to keep public pressure on Tallahassee. It is time re-examine and reject the decision to sacrifice tomorrow's environmental and financial resources with yesterday's ideas.

**Please go to page 11 and contact your legislators and tell them to REPEAL the Toll Roads Law.**

Thanks very much for your support of the Federation and our mission to keep our beloved state an ecologically sustainable place to live.



## Florida Fish & Wildlife News

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Title: Guardian of the Gulf Photographers: Ken Macejka  
Location: Fort Myers Animal: Great egret

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# 2020 PHOTO CONTEST

## 2020 Photo Contest Winners

**F**WF is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 Photo Contest. This year, we were grateful to have the fantastic photographer Nick Baldwin of Tallahassee as our

judge. Thank you to all the photographers who entered, and to Nick for taking the time to review the hundreds of photos entered. You will find other winning photos

from the contest throughout this publication. Visit [www.snappiephoto.com](http://www.snappiephoto.com) to view the winners online and we hope you enter the contest in 2021!



### Cover Image – 2020 Photo Contest Winner

**First Place - Birds**

*Photographer:* Ken Macejka

*Title:* Guardian of the Gulf

*Location:* Fort Myers

*Animal:* Snowy egret

*Description:* A beautiful egret aggressively, but gracefully, lands near the Gulf of Mexico.

## In Memory of Our Dear Friend Steve O'Hara

**O**n New Year's Eve, 2020, J. Stephen O'Hara, passed away at his home in Jacksonville. Steve, a Tallahassee native and well-respected and highly ethical trial attorney, was also a deeply committed conservationist. He supported the Florida Wildlife Federation for over 40 years by service on the Board, with legal advice and true friendship. His commitment to the natural world came about as a participant in outdoor activities including hunting, fishing and kayaking. As he watched his native state being overwhelmed by development and the loss of the natural wonders he cherished, he willingly volunteered his time and expertise to ensure that his children and grandchildren, and thereby all of us, would be able to enjoy and appreciate the "real Florida."

FWF has never had a truer friend and advocate. We send sincere condolences and love to Jeri and Steve's family.



*Steve O'Hara and his wife Jeri.*



# Dear Fellow Conservationists:

**H**oping all are still staying safe with the pandemic, and that we may finally have a light at the end of the tunnel with a vaccine. I especially want to say thank you to all our health care workers who are dealing with increased stress as hospitals overflow with those infected.

Even as we struggle with the virus, and its mutations, we must keep an eye on the goals of securing a livable and beautiful state by opposing poor planning and supporting initiatives that keep our water abundant and clean and our lands thriving with wildlife.

Our efforts to support the will of the 75% of voters who supported Amendment 1, the **Water and Land Legacy Amendment**, may be reaching a critical point. Amendment 1 was the 2014 Constitutional Amendment that was supposed to fully fund programs like Florida Forever per the *Land Acquisition* Trust Fund. Unfortunately, the Legislature did not spend the resources in the way they were intended. On December 29, 2020, following a hearing on FWF's motion for summary judgment, the circuit court sided with our interpretation of the Amendment - that its purpose was to fund the conservation and management of natural lands now in the state's ownership and future acquisitions. The court also decided that the case still needed to go to trial to decide exactly what

expenditures were constitutional. We hope for a trial date as soon as possible. It has now been six years since this Amendment was passed and it needs to be abided by.

As to water, Florida Wildlife Federation and other groups are opposing the transfer of power to regulate federal dredge and fill

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“Florida has already lost approximately 50% of its wetlands”

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permits from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to our state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Only two other states in the nation have pursued this course of action because to faithfully protect our remaining **wetlands** requires money and personnel. Florida has already lost approximately 50% of its wetlands, and we are very concerned that an underfunded state agency such as DEP, even with the best intentions, will not be able to carry out this critically important function. We are also

concerned about the apparent failure to abide by the laws and rules set forth to properly make such a transfer of authority. Sufficient wetland protection is even more important as we no longer have statewide growth management and new residents continue to pour into the state.

On the restoration of the **Apalachicola River and Bay**, we have submitted an amicus brief to the United States Supreme Court on behalf of Florida. The Bay is so critically impaired that one cannot even legally harvest oysters there anymore. The Court heard arguments in this case on February 22, 2021.

We also continue to strongly oppose the MCORES three toll roads. It is almost unconscionable that the state would expend billions of our tax dollars to explode growth into what remains of our rural lands – the lands that provide our remaining agriculture, timber and rural lifestyles. They also provide some of our most valuable remaining wildlife habitats and provide enormous water recharge.

The use of **renewable energy** in the United States is rising as production costs fall. Additionally, the use of on and offshore wind turbines is expanding. A new turbine with blades the size of two football fields that can power 12,000 homes has been constructed. That is all good news, but we can



do more to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

I will leave you with some good news. In 2020, 42,000 acres were permanently protected from development due to the reduced Florida Forever program. This includes a 578-acre tract in the Panhandles' Gulf County to

protect Lake Wimico and a 10,702 acre tract in South Florida's Hendry County to help preserve the future of the Florida panther and stop a controversial water project.

Many thanks to our growing number of volunteers, including those making native plant and

animal videos for educational purposes.

Take care.

**Action Item:** Go to page 11 and see how you can tell our elected leaders to **Repeal** the misguided **MCORES** toll roads!

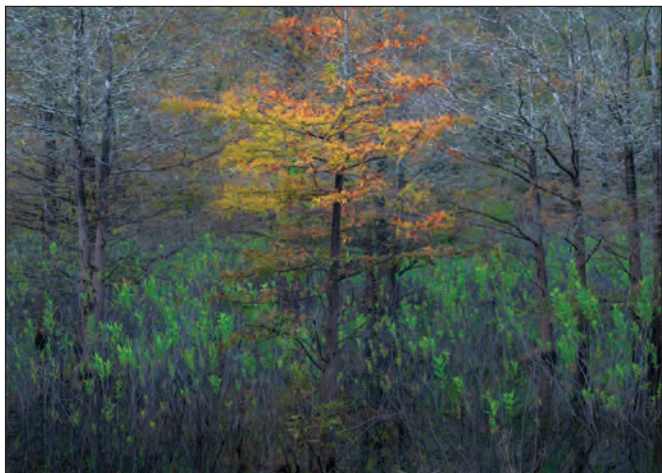
*Quinn T. Robertson*



**Second Place Flowers** Photographer: Jim Matiya  
Title: A passion plant! Location: Fort Myers  
Plant: Purple Passion Flower Description: While walking in Ft. Myers, I saw a butterfly circling an area, so I quietly approached as the butterfly landed near a flower. Bingo! A purple passion!



**Garden** Photographer: Kimberly Pier  
Title: Starfish in the Garden Location: Venice  
Description: Unexpected find on one of our walks about Venice.



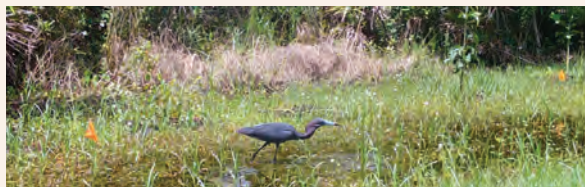
**Landscape** Photographer: Donald Pelliccia Title: Last to Burn  
Location: Ocala Description: This image was from a surprising early fall color change in a swampy area of Florida. I really like the abstract look that the contrasting colors and textures provided. The center tree's autumn orange tones gave the illusion of fire while the surrounding trees, which already have lost their leaves, appeared charred.



## Annual Awards Banquet Notice

### CANCELLED

Due to the COVID pandemic, FWF's 2021 annual awards banquet, scheduled for June 5, 2021, has been cancelled. In lieu thereof, a regular meeting of the Board and Affiliate Organizations will take place online. Award recipients will be recognized and receive their awards via post or in person. We hope for a safer environment next year. Thanks!







## Go Plant a Tree!

**P**lanting a tree is a small action with a big impact. It's something one person can do to help fight climate change. *"Sometimes I tell myself, I may only be planting a tree here, but just imagine what's happening if there are billions of people out there doing something. Just imagine the power of what we can do..."* (Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya). We can plant a tree at home if we have property and we can team with others to plant more trees around neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, businesses and parks.

We will need a wealth of trees in the future to help mitigate some of the effects of a hotter and more variable climate. Trees capture and store carbon, create shade, help lower temperatures and decrease air pollution. They provide habitat for wildlife, absorb rainwater in storms and benefit our physical and mental well-being. In sum, trees help make our communities more resilient to the effects of climate change.

As the climate gets hotter, cities are sharply affected by the increasing temperature. Buildings and pavement absorb heat, store it and release it slowly. As we record hotter days and warmer nights, the "heat island effect" adds to this serious problem. Trees and green spaces can cool the



Photographer: Bryant Turffs Location: Myakka River State Park Plant: Live Oak

surrounding environment, moderating temperatures like natural air-conditioners. Studies have shown that large, forested parks can significantly reduce temperatures in surrounding neighborhoods. This is good news as it points to the value of efforts like creating pocket parks and turning vacant lots into green spaces.

Growing a healthy tree takes a commitment to nurture it as it becomes established, so it is important to have a plan to care for trees after planting. Luckily, there are many resources to help in the process. Your county extension office and local native plant nurseries can provide information on selecting the right tree for the site, planting, watering and maintaining it.

You don't have to go it alone! Across the state, communities and

organizations are working to increase tree canopies by providing trees to residents or sponsoring planting days for celebrations like Florida's Arbor Day. While some planting events have been cancelled or postponed due to Covid-19, many local tree giveaways will still be held. From the *Crawfordville Arbor Day* celebration in Wakulla County, to West Palm Beach's *10,000 Trees in 10 Years* project, to Keep Nassau Beautiful's *Adopt-a-Tree* program, many organizations gave away trees to residents in January.

In South Florida, the organization Community Greening (CG), an urban forestry non-profit, works with residents and organizations to transform urban green spaces. They have planted thousands of trees with volunteers of all ages in parks, yards, schools and urban orchards.



Now more than ever, we need trees! We need to continue to plant to increase the canopy, especially in areas with few trees, replace unhealthy trees and increase the diversity of native species. One person can plant a tree, and groups of us planting together can have fun and spread trees throughout our communities.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/creating-urban-forest/>

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/ep31400.pdf>



Photographer: Bryant Turffs



**Wildlife** Photographer: John D. Andersen Title: "Lucky Day"

Location: Big Cypress National Preserve Animal: Alligator

Description: I watched this gator thrash around in the shallow waters of Big Cypress for almost ½ hour, sweeping his head back and forth, jaws slamming repeatedly in hopes of snagging a bite to eat. I never saw him catch anything, but upon later review of my images it turns out that I was lucky to capture this photo of a bass jumping out of the way of the snapping teeth. A lucky day for us both!



## Featured Animal

### Florida Native – Wild Turkey

Florida is blessed with two species of wild turkey, the Eastern and the Osceola. The Eastern (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) inhabits the Panhandle and North Florida, while the Osceola (*M.g. osceola*) lives in Central and South Florida. Both turkeys are large birds with long legs, rounded tails and small heads on a long slim neck. Feeding on acorns, fruits, insects and small invertebrates, they walk through the forest concentrating on the forest floor. Wild turkey are good fliers, and can travel up to 55 miles per hour over short distances. They prefer to roost at night over water for protection. Male turkeys, called toms or gobblers, have a bald, pinkish red head and a red wattle. Males also possess a beard that hangs down from their chest. Females are smaller, possess a blue-gray head and generally have no beard. If we keep our woods, we can keep our wonderful turkeys!



Photographer: Marie Dugan

Location: Lake Kissimmee State Park



## Sharing the Landscape Draws National and International Attention

**L**ate last year, the Florida Wildlife Federation's partnership with the fStop Foundation went viral after a video of a man saving his puppy from an alligator in Lee County circulated widely online.

It's hard to forget the story of Gunner, the Cavalier King Charles spaniel, who was saved from the jaws of an alligator by his owner Richard Wilbanks (who didn't even drop his cigar throughout the entire incident!). This footage was captured thanks to our Sharing the Landscape project. This joint initiative placed cameras in the backyards of homes adjacent to wild lands to capture footage of Southwest Florida's diverse wildlife. The goal of the partnership is to elevate the conversation about how humans and wildlife both inherently share the same landscape.

The project kicked off in May 2020 with 17 participating homeowners in neighborhoods off Corkscrew Road in Lee County. This portion of Corkscrew Road currently has multiple residential developments on both the north and south sides of the roadway and there is currently approval for another residential development on the south side of the road. These developments limit the suitable habitat areas necessary for wildlife movement. Thankfully,



Photographer: Molly DuVall Location: By Conservation Collier - Caracara Prairie Preserve

there has been a considerable amount of money invested for safe wildlife movement through this area including both a wildlife crossing and significant land preservation done by both private and government entities. All of these investments have contributed to establishing the connections for wildlife throughout this region, but instances of conflicts between humans and wildlife will rise as more development occurs.

In areas where development exists within and around wildlife habitat, education is the best tool to help reduce human-wildlife conflicts. The Sharing the Landscape project is a unique way for the Federation to interact with residents and educate the greater community.

Carrying out this project is labor-intensive as each camera must be serviced regularly. The Federation is actively seeking additional funding to be able to implement solar power and cloud-

based software which will enable project expansion to other areas of the state. The photos and videos collected from the cameras will be used in social media campaigns to highlight how humans and wildlife can share the landscape. When it is safe to do so, the Federation also looks forward to hosting educational presentations

on Sharing the Landscape to interested residential communities and groups.

As for Gunner and Mr. Wilbanks, Gunner was treated for a small puncture on his stomach and has already fully recovered. Mr. Wilbanks received a tetanus shot and will keep his dog on a leash and farther away from the water from now on.

It is critical that people who live at the interface of wildlands take extra precautions — dogs should be leashed and both people and pets should avoid lingering at the edge of large retention ponds where alligators are known to occur. FWF is grateful that all involved in this viral incident are okay. We are even more grateful to have volunteers like Mr. Wilbanks who, despite nearly losing his dog, still has an appreciation for nature and came out of this experience with an even a deeper understanding of the need to respect wildlife. If you wish to donate to the Federation's Sharing



the Landscape project or learn more about this project, please visit our webpage:

<https://floridawildlife.federation.org/sharing-the-landscape/>

## Voters Approve Conservation Collier

With support from 77% of the electorate, Collier County overwhelmingly supported a non-binding referendum to re-authorize funding for a county land acquisition program in Collier County. Conservation Collier is a long-standing land preservation program and since its inception in 2003, the program has acquired 21 properties totaling over 4,300 acres. Acquisitions halted when the tax sunset in 2013.

This past November, Collier County residents were asked to vote on a 0.25 mill ad valorem tax that will last 10 years. The voters



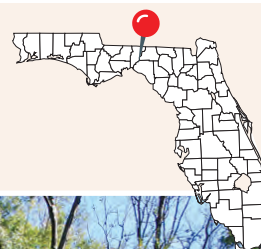
*Photo by Florida Wildlife Federation*

have spoken and the tax, which equates to \$25 a year for each \$100,000 of taxable property value, will be renewed. The money raised will allow the Conservation Collier program to continue to acquire, preserve and manage environmentally sensitive lands and provide public access to those lands wherever possible. This includes properties like the Caracara Prairie Preserve, which provides important panther habitat as well as recreational opportunities.

The support for Conservation Collier shows that preserving our natural resources is neither a 'red' nor 'blue' issue, but rather 'green.' Preserving land helps to protect important water resources, wildlife habitat, and improves overall quality of life for all. The people of Collier County came together this past November to show that regardless of political affiliation, preserving land is important to them and they are willing to tax themselves for it. Collier County is making an investment in the future, but we need additional conservation funding both locally and statewide. Collier County's passion to invest in land conservation is admirable, and the Federation will continue to advocate for such investments throughout the state.



## Featured Natural Area



### Letchworth-Love Mounds Archeological State Park

If one is looking for a quiet and beautiful place to relax, one could likely do no better than Letchworth-Love State Park. Containing 188 acres, this park protects the tallest Native American mound in Florida, which is one of three such mounds in the Panhandle. The mound, which was originally cleared of trees, was used for ceremonial and religious purposes and is 46-50 feet in height and approximately 300 feet wide. Built by the Swift Creek and Weeden cultures, the mound was originally surrounded by a village whose people hunted, fished and grew maize for sustenance.

There is good information about native tribes on site, and recreation includes picnicking, hiking and nature viewing. Wild and bird life include white-tailed deer, wild turkey, hawks, kites and occasionally bobwhite quail. Situated due south of Lake Miccosukee, it is also near the historic town of Monticello, which is also well worth a visit. Location: 4500 Sunray Rd., South, Monticello, FL 32344; 850 487-7989.





## Bald Cypress

I have always liked the Florida Highwayman paintings from the 1950's and '60's. Many of these paintings do a great job of romancing the swampy areas of Florida. If I had to pick a tree that best represents Florida swamps, it would probably be the bald cypress.

Interestingly, this redwood of the Southeast is represented by two separate species. The pond-cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) and the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). The bald cypress is the larger of the two trees and grows in more fertile areas, especially along rivers. The pond cypress, as its name implies, grows where the water is more stagnant and soils less fertile. While difficult to tell apart, the pond-cypress has a more feathery foliage. I planted one at my old office and everyone fell in love with it.

One of the main attributes of either cypress is its ability to withstand much of what our Florida environment throws at it. It is one of our most wind resistant trees. Research by the University of Florida places it in the highest of four categories in its ability to survive hurricane force winds. Bald cypress is also fire resistant. I have seen where bald cypress trees survived wildfire damage better than pine trees growing right next to it. Granted, the times I have observed this, the cypress were often in a slightly wetter spot, and these trees resprouted along their trunks and branches like many hardwood trees despite most of the foliage being burned off.

Although fire can initially seem



Bald cypress growing well and "knee free" in an urban setting. Photo by Stan Rosenthal

destructive to many of our wetlands, it has been found that the long-lived, shade intolerant bald cypress often benefits from fire as it kills back competing vegetation so that the more fire tolerant bald cypress can reseed in the now newly cleared seed bed.

In the wild, groups of bald cypress trees growing along rivers and estuaries are frequently used for roosting by turkeys, nesting herons, egrets and other wading birds. Older trees with cavities often have holes that make good nesting sites. Eagles and osprey may build nests in large old cypress trees and the cypress seeds are a food source for ducks, wild turkey, songbirds, squirrels, and some wading birds.

Of course, I have left out one of the bald cypress's most peculiar qualities: its knees. We have learned that under the knees of bald cypress there are roots. It seems that this is an adaptation for more wind sturdiness.

Surprisingly, bald cypress grows very well in upland soils when planted as a mulched urban tree, as it is free from competition from other plants. We have found that on these sites the knees don't occur unless the soil is really compacted or overwatering occurs. Bald-cypress in urban settings has also been found to be relatively disease free. Another advantage of bald cypress is that its needles turn a nice russet color in autumn before they fall to the ground, letting in winter sun. Many people that planted them are very



Huge cypress knees in St. Marks River Preserve State Park. Photo by Stan Rosenthal

happy with this tree in their yard.

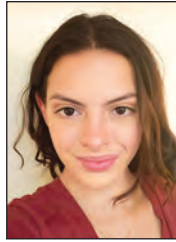
If you decide to plant a bald cypress, or any other tree, it really makes a big difference in both survival and growth rate if you use good planting and establishment methods. An informative website can be found at:

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/planting.shtml>.



# Importance of Wetlands in Florida

The wetlands in Florida are essential to both wildlife and people. However, as a society, we do not always treat them as such. We have been taking the wetlands for granted and have been damaging them without considering the consequences.



Allison Ramos

While wetlands provide habitat for plants and animals, they are also beneficial to humans. They filter pollutants from water, making the wetlands safe for fishing and swimming. They also reduce carbon dioxide emissions by trapping carbon. This decreases the amount of carbon that ends up in the atmosphere, slowing climate change. Wetlands also reduce flooding by storing excess rain. The wetlands are extremely important for Miami, as sea levels are rising and the remaining Everglades reduces flooding in the city. Despite the benefits the wetlands provide for Florida, we are destroying them.

By draining the wetlands for agricultural use and urban development, utilizing canals and levees for water control and diversion, and introducing species to the wetlands that are not native, we are killing them. More than half of the original wetlands in Florida are now gone, hurting both people and wildlife. We must stop altering the wetlands from their natural state, reduce our emissions, and be aware of the pollutants we utilize and how they affect areas like the wetlands. It is time that we preserve and restore the wetlands in Florida as they are essential to both humans and wildlife alike.

Los humedales de Florida son esenciales tanto para la vida silvestre como para las personas; sin embargo, como sociedad, no siempre los tratamos como tales. Hemos estado ignorando los humedales y los hemos estado dañando sin considerar las consecuencias.

Si bien los humedales proporcionan hábitat para plantas y animales, también son beneficiosos para los humanos. Filtran los contaminantes del agua, lo que hace que los humedales sean seguros para pescar y nadar. También reducen las emisiones de dióxido de carbono al atrapar el carbono. Esto disminuye la cantidad de carbono que termina en la atmósfera, frenando el cambio climático. Los humedales también reducen las inundaciones al almacenar agua por el exceso de lluvia. Los humedales son extremadamente importantes para Miami, ya que el nivel del mar está aumentando y los Everglades reducen las inundaciones en la ciudad. A pesar de los beneficios que los humedales brindan a Florida, los estamos destruyendo.

Al drenar los humedales para uso agrícola y desarrollo urbano, utilizando canales y diques para el control y la desviación del agua, e introduciendo especies en los humedales que no son nativas, los estamos eliminando. Más de la mitad de los humedales originales de Florida han desaparecido, lo que daña tanto a las personas como a la vida silvestre. Debemos dejar de alterar los humedales de su estado natural, reducir nuestras emisiones y ser conscientes de los contaminantes que utilizamos y cómo afectan áreas como los humedales. Es hora de que preservemos y restauremos los humedales de Florida ya que son esenciales tanto para los seres humanos y para la vida silvestre.

**TELL  
THEM**



**Repeal  
the Law**

## 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: 850-487-5010, [simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov)

Representative Chris Sprowls: 850-717-5065, [chris.sprowls@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:chris.sprowls@myfloridahouse.gov)

*Thank You!*

# Salamanders in the Everglades

Tasman Rosenfeld

South Florida was the perfect place for a lover of reptiles and amphibians like me to grow up in. “Herps”, as enthusiasts and biologists call them, are present in every terrestrial and aquatic habitat in the state. Without much difficulty, one can come across crocodilians, turtles, frogs, lizards, and snakes — man, the snakes are everywhere. The introduced populations of pythons and iguanas and geckos and caimans that draw in hordes of herp enthusiasts from around the country are familiar to me. However, the coolest of these animals, and the ones I most desperately wanted to find, were salamanders: those slimy, lizard-like amphibians that thrive in distant and cool, damp climates, like the foggy redwood forests of the Pacific Northwest, or the clear, rocky streams of the Smoky Mountains. I knew that some salamanders made it down into Apalachicola National Forest, a place I knew I’d visit someday in search of the fabled Apalachicola kingsnake, but even the Panhandle seemed too far from my home in Broward County.

Years went by and I ended up finding my first wild salamanders while visiting family in Massachusetts and Maine. I was ecstatic, but found myself wishing they were closer to home. Why couldn’t I find salamanders in the Everglades?

As it turns out, I could. The four species that inhabit South Florida slipped right past my radar for years. Keeping pet salamanders alive in my hot, muggy South Florida was so difficult that finding them locally seemed too farfetched



Animal: Greater siren (*Siren lacertina*)  
Photographer: Jake Scott

to even lead me to look them up in a book.

Turns out South Florida’s salamanders mostly occupy densely vegetated freshwater communities, many of which dry up seasonally. This ephemeral nature of the marshes and swamps keeps predatory fish from living in them except when rain causes these habitats to connect to larger, permanent bodies of water. Such fish die off during droughts, but salamanders survive by undergoing a period of dormancy called aestivation. Greater sirens (*Siren lacertina*) and Everglades dwarf sirens (*Pseudobranchius axanthus belli*) are experts at this. Seeking shelter under logs, mud, or periphyton (matted network of microbes, colonial algae, and decaying plant matter) these two-legged aquatic salamanders secrete a mucus that covers their body and slows their metabolism to a near-complete stop until the next rain.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the sirens is the bushy external gills that lie behind their head. These gills allow the animals to extract more oxygen from their relatively oxygen-depleted waters and in most salamander species are lost upon reaching sexual maturity. Sirens, however, are paedomorphic, meaning that they retain juvenile

characteristics all the way through adulthood.

Looking superficially more like eels than archetypal salamanders, two-toed amphiumas (*Amphiuma means*) grow to lengths of almost four feet, making them North America’s longest salamander. Their tiny legs serve no real function, but each of them bears — you guessed it — two toes. They may not use their legs, but they certainly do use their teeth! Fisherman and herpetologists have been reported to suffer painful and bloody bites from these alien-looking creatures. Their size and voracious predatory nature allow them to dwell in more permanent bodies of water in addition to temporary ones. Amphiumas are



Animal: Peninsula newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens piaropicola*) larva  
Photographer: Tasman Rosenfeld

probably quite abundant despite rarely being seen.

The first step in saving these oft-overlooked creatures and their habitats is to recognize and appreciate their existence. Who knows? Next time you’re out on a boardwalk, maybe you’ll catch the fleeting glimpse of an amphiuma, or hear the vocalization of a siren. If you do, I’m sure you will find them as fascinating as I do, and join me in working towards preserving their habitats and lives.





# FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S *Wild Florida Sweepstakes*

## Congratulations to the Winner of the 2020 Wild Florida Sweepstakes!

The annual sweepstakes helps the Florida Wildlife Federation raise funds to pursue fish, wildlife and habitat programs so we all can continue to enjoy Florida's wonderful outdoors!

The drawing was held December 17, 2020 at FWF headquarters, 2545 Blalstone Pines Dr., Tallahassee, FL and was supervised by Carroll and Co., Inc., Certified Public Accountants.

Michelle Schloot of Altamonte Springs was the lucky Grand Prize winner for 2020. We thank Ms. Schloot and all those folks who entered the Sweeps!

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL FREE, WITHIN THE STATE, (800)-435-7352 OR BY VISITING [WWW.FLORIDACONSUMERHELP.COM](http://WWW.FLORIDACONSUMERHELP.COM). REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. THE REGISTRATION NUMBER ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES TO THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION IS: CH499



Former FWF Board Chair Dr. Jay Exum and Sweepstakes winner Michelle Schloot.



Preston Robertson, FWF President, with Stephen Roeder, CPA, Carroll and Company, who pulled the Grand Prize Sweepstakes ticket at Federation Headquarters in December.

# FLORIDA WILDLIFE *Kids' Quiz*

by Marney Richards

**1.** This raptor can be seen soaring overhead in Florida in spring and summer and recognized by its long forked tail.



**2.** Is Florida's official state tree "endemic" to our state?



**3.** Have you ever seen a "glass snake"?



See page 14 for answers and more information.



### Kids Category

Photographer: Jake Turner

Title: I Believe I Can Fly

Location: Sarasota

Animal: Sandhill crane

Description: I was taking pictures of a crane family when the youngest of the group tried to show its mother it's flying skills!

# Crawfordville Arbor Day 2021

This year's tree giveaway was different. There were no crowds and long lines inside Hudson Park on January 16; there were however lines of cars along the park's perimeter coming and going throughout the day. Concentration was on safety for all

volunteers and tree recipients. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic almost 1,000 trees were given away!

*Photos and text by Claudia Farren*



Crawfordville Arbor Day is a partnership between the Wakulla County Garden Club, Florida Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation, Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and other Wakulla County community organizations.



The Wakulla County Garden Club bought tree seedlings in December 2019 with funds from NWF's Trees for Wildlife Program. They were planted in pots in January and nurtured by garden club members for a year at Just Fruits & Exotics Nursery.



The day before Arbor Day the trees were transported in trailers from the nursery to Hudson Park. Then each individual order was assembled according to the county resident's last name. Each order included a *How to Plant Your Tree* letter and webpage addresses for further information about all the trees given away.



Jacob Arrizola and Steve Cushman place an advance order of trees in an SUV.



Wakulla County Commissioner Chuck Hess delivers two trees to Hannah Heinke-Green.

## Answers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

**1.** The swallow-tailed kite has distinct black and white plumage and deeply forked tail. These kites are extremely maneuverable in flight — soaring, hanging motionless, even rolling upside down. Swallow-tailed kites catch insects in the air and other small creatures by swooping low through trees.

**2.** The cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) is our state tree and the state tree of South Carolina! The palm is native to the Southeast and is found from North Carolina to the Keys. It is also native to the Bahamas and Cuba. *Endemic* plants are plants found only in their specific regions and nowhere else.

**3.** Glass lizards are often called “glass snakes” but are actually lizards without legs. Their long tails break off easily, but then regrow. The lizards have eyelids and ear openings, unlike snakes. They eat crickets, grasshoppers, spiders and invertebrates. There are four species of glass lizards throughout the state, found in woods, meadows, grasslands and sometimes neighborhoods.

*How Did You Do, Florida Kid?*





# Thank You to Our Donors

## New Life Members:

Gail Baker, Niceville

Gretchen Banks, Sanibel

## New Wildlife Legacy Member:

Linda Heller, The Villages

*\*Legacy Club Members are those who have donated \$5,000 or more in a single gift.*

*Eagle Club Members are \$2,500 donors and Life Members are \$1,000 donors.*

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**“ FWF’s mission is to conserve Florida’s wildlife, habitat, and natural resources through education, advocacy and science-based stewardship.”**

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## Thank You for Your Generous Support!



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*Donations Have Been Received in Memory of:*

### Betty Roberts

by Martha & Bud McSorley

by Betty Steffens

by Ann & Jeff VanderMeer

### David Zajowski

by Billy & Vida Maus

### Lore Evenden

by William Evenden

### Jaxon Maschke

by Timothy Kern

by Natalia Ortega

by Erica Ramirez

by Ana Mari Ortega Schwazberg

by Jay & Vicki White

by Megan Rackley

### Steve O'Hara

by Roz and Mark Abramson

by Tyrie Boyer

by Kathy Brown

by Todd Denmark

by Natalie Dreyer

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by Eddie Fleming

by Debbie Grant

by Rob and Mary Lynn Heekin

by Jennifer Heffernan

by Catie Humphreys

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by Joe and Jan Knecht

by Angie Koury

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by Burness and Cheryl Morris

by Scott & Erin Nooney

by Elise & Greg Nowikowski

by David O'Hara

by Paige Quinlivan

by Preston and Christina Robertson

by Tracy Sieber

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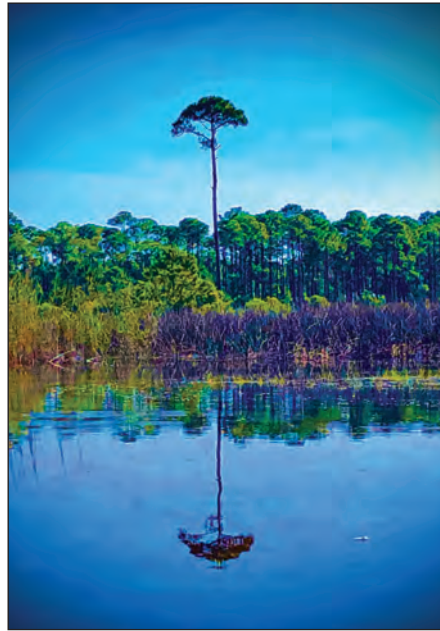
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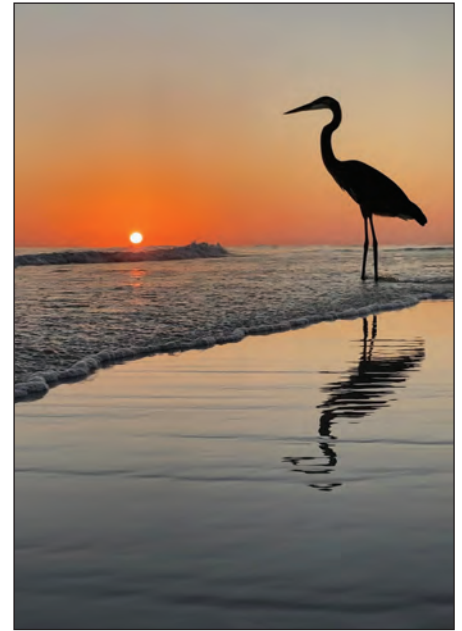
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**Recreation** Photographer: Jessica Kerr  
*Title:* Dolphin Show *Location:* Manasota Key  
*Description:* Watching the private dolphin show in Manasota Key!



**Mobile** Photographer: Milton Siegle  
*Title:* N/A *Location:* Grayton Beach  
*Description:* Reflection of tree at Grayton Beach.



**Sunset-Sunrise** Photographer: Jessica Lerner  
*Title:* Amber Reflection  
*Location:* Princess Beach, Okaloosa Island  
*Description:* While running the beach at sunset I spotted this beautiful heron. I approached slowly, and he ended up letting me sit right next to him! So naturally, I had to take his picture. I love that our wildlife seems to enjoy beautiful Florida sunsets as much as I do.



**Waterscape** Photographer: Kat Wilson  
*Title:* Misty Mornings.... *Location:* Wakulla Springs State Park  
*Description:* A fog bank recedes to reveal the quiet beauty of the Wakulla River.



Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation