



Florida Fish & Wildlife News

Volume 35, Issue 2
Spring 2021

Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

Misguided Toll Roads Put to Rest

Page 3

President's Message

Page 4

The Everyday Environmentalist

Page 6

Southwest Florida Report

Page 8

The State of the Forest

Page 10



Chair's Message

Joe Atterbury

Some Good News

When I went to law school in the mid-1970s, my criminal law professor remarked that no one was safe when the Legislature was in session. We have been reminded of that comment repeatedly over the years and again in 2019, when the Florida Legislature authorized the construction of 330 miles of new toll roads, despite the fact there had been no feasibility studies conducted as to the economic need, ecological consequences, or the location of these roads. The toll roads were known as MCORES and construction was to begin next year.

I am pleased to report that after our state spent millions on this boondoggle, the Florida Legislature, via Senate Bill 100, has reversed course and largely repealed the bill that authorized this project. The vote was nearly unanimous and the bill will be sent on to the Governor. We are delighted to see the end of the original MCORES toll roads plan, which Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) and our allies have been fighting for two years.

Undoubtedly, there will continue to be incessant attempts to pave over the rural and natural areas of this state in the name of progress. This very unusual Senate reconsideration, however, is a reminder that the members of FWF, other organizations, and informed individuals can make a difference by calling attention to and questioning ill-conceived ideas.

To retain open space, habitats,

woods and wetlands in the face of sprawl will be a constant battle. What can we do in the future to avert the "progress" envisioned by a massive roadway scheme in the diminishing areas that are largely undeveloped? Visit some of the places that would be impacted. We can help support the communities and small businesses dependent on visitors who appreciate the beauty of natural areas adjacent to rural communities. Remind elected leaders that progress should not be defined by the construction of an interchange convenience store which drains the lifeblood out of a small town five miles away.

One of my favorite spots is Stephen Foster State Park in White Springs where I can paddle the Suwannee. Rent a kayak, canoe or tube. Florida's only class three rapids (Big Shoals State Park) are nearby. If you don't want to get your feet wet, you can hike the Florida Trail which goes along the high banks of this beautiful river. The Park has clean cabins, water and electric hook ups, and primitive camping. Help those small communities that are partially dependent on those who appreciate what is left of Old Florida. No offense to Disney, but don't forget the real thing.

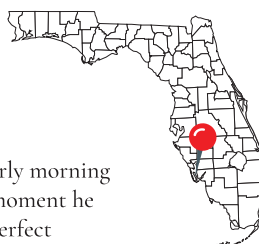


Cover Photo

Photographer: Marie Laforge

Location: Stump Pass Beach State Park

This majestic blue heron took flight right in front of me during my early morning beach walk and I was able to capture his graceful lift, and for a brief moment he looked like he was dancing on the water. The colors of dawn made a perfect background for this magical moment.



Florida Fish & Wildlife News

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Title: Water Dancer Photographer: Marie Laforge
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The Florida Fish & Wildlife News

is published quarterly by the Florida Wildlife Federation
2545 Blairstone Pines Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
ISSN: 1520-8214

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Misguided Toll Roads Put to Rest - FWF and You Helped Kill MCORES Fiasco

In the last days of the 2019 Legislative Session, our elected leaders mandated that three enormously costly and environmentally damaging toll roads be built in the last remaining rural areas of the peninsula (the roads were known as MCORES). Florida Wildlife Federation and other groups immediately started a campaign to stop this effort, which was beneficial only to potential developers along the routes and the road builders themselves. Moreover, we presently have billions of dollars in road maintenance and improvements, especially in South Florida, that need to be attended to. Three task forces were formed to examine the toll roads, and all three concluded that there was no necessity to the roads and the expense. Additionally, non-

partisan Florida Tax Watch declared the toll roads a financial disaster.

Thankfully, the 2020 Legislative Session, after two years of public opposition, saw the repeal of the MCORES toll roads plan, and substituted a much less expensive and onerous law that puts the process under the Department of Transportation and limits road expansion. For that we are grateful, as the MCORES toll roads would have spelt the end of rural lifestyles, severe degradation of our environment and water resources, and possibly the elimination of the Florida panther.

FWF played its part by proposing amendments to the Senate sponsor of Senate Bill 100, the repeal

legislation, and many of these environmental protections made their way into the bill. SB 100 passed the Florida Senate 39-1 and the Florida House of Representatives 115-0 and we now await action by the Governor.

It is highly unusual for a law that passed overwhelmingly just two years ago to be repealed by a similar margin. The constant drum beat of opposition no doubt helped to kill this very bad idea.

It is hoped we can now move to less destructive modes of transportation

Many thanks to all who took part in our democracy and voiced your concerns over the toll roads!

Florida Forever Program Funded

Due to the efforts of Floridians who care, the fabled Florida Forever program, which, with its predecessors, has saved millions of acres of wetlands and wild places across the state, has now been funded by the 2021 Florida Legislature at \$100 million. Importantly, the Legislature also voted to support \$300 million from anticipated federal American Rescue Plan monies to conserve defined wildlife corridors and ranchlands. Florida Forever perpetually protects environmentally sensitive lands for ourselves and future generations and helps preserve our water supply and critical habitats for beloved species such as the Florida panther and the black bear.

Special places protected to date include Apalachicola River wetlands and Bald Point in the Panhandle, rare freshwater springs in North Central Florida, the Wekiva to Ocala



Photographer: Lauren Johnson Location: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Greenway, the ancient dune system of the Lake Wales Ridge and priority properties in the Everglades and the Keys. These lands not only keep our state beautiful and maintain our quality of life but create jobs with outdoor recreation booming in popularity.

Many, many thanks to all those who contacted our State Senators and Representatives and asked them to adequately fund Florida Forever and support the conservation of our natural resources!



Dear Federation Members and Supporters:

We are hopefully moving into a post-pandemic world, and with spring in the air, there seems to be somewhat more optimism about the future. We hope all can get out and enjoy the natural world.

I am delighted to report that Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) has been voted the best non-profit organization in the city by the readers of *Tallahassee* magazine! This is quite an honor, and we are pleased to have been recognized for our work on behalf of the land, water and wildlife of our state.

The 2021 Florida Legislative Session will be over by the time you read this as it is scheduled to conclude on April 30. This Session, FWF focused on repealing the environmentally devastating and incredibly expensive MCORES toll roads law. This law, passed in 2019, mandated the construction of over 300 miles of toll roads in what remains of the rural portions of the peninsula. As of this writing, I am delighted to report that the Legislature has approved Senate Bill 100 to repeal the MCORES law. This bill includes environmental protection language proposed by FWF and other conservation groups. The bill will greatly diminish the impact of the roads. Thanks much to all who voiced opposition to the MCORES boondoggle!

As to **climate change**, the Legislature has finally realized that

seas are rising and our weather is changing, and not for the better. The University of Miami predicts 2021 will again be “above normal” as to storm and hurricane activity, with multiple named storms and between 3-5 hurricanes with winds over 110 mph. This follows last year’s unprecedented 30 tropical

“ Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) has been voted the best non-profit organization in the city . . . ”

storms and 13 hurricanes. As of this writing the Legislature is considering Senate Bill 1954/House Bill 7019 to fund local resiliency planning and administration of grants to mitigate against rising seas, which is a start. We really need to tackle this issue at the source: greenhouse gas emissions that are changing the climate. This is especially important in Florida with our 1,350 miles of coastline.

We continued to push for

adequate funding for the once world-renown **Florida Forever** program, which under previous Administrations was appropriated \$300 million per year. In 2014, 75% of voters supported full funding by a constitutional amendment, but that mandate has been largely ignored and is why FWF is presently in court. The 2021 Florida Legislature has approved \$100 million in state funding for the Florida Forever program and will use \$300 million of federal money from the American Rescue Plan if that money becomes available. Note this is out of a state budget of over \$100 billion. Saving land, open space and our precious waters is a good investment, especially with Florida’s population booming.

Our litigation efforts to save the famed Apalachicola River and Bay, once home to a unique and abundant oyster fishery, have hit a speed bump. The US Supreme Court unfortunately held for the State of Georgia against the State of Florida as to water supply in the Apalachicola system. FWF had filed an amicus brief in that matter on behalf of Florida, as water flow from Georgia severely hinders oyster populations due to fluctuations in salinity levels. While we have lost this attempt, we continue our case against the US Army Corps of Engineers and that agency’s water control manual which we assert does not take

environmental factors sufficiently into consideration.

We also continue our legal fight against the state taking dredge and fill permitting authority from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Florida simply does not have the financial wherewithal and personnel to take on the critical task of protecting our remaining wetlands.

While unrelated to wetlands, the disaster at the Piney Point site, where a breach in a holding pond has released hundreds of millions of gallons of polluted water into Tampa Bay, shows that we need to do more to protect our waters. This Bay, where Floridians have spent considerable time and money in

restoration efforts, is now a dumping site for phosphorus and nitrogen that feed harmful algae blooms and devastate marine species and ecosystems. We can do better than this.

Lastly, FWF is proud to stand with those who seek to undo the damage caused by the construction of the Rodman Dam on the **Ocklawaha River**. This dam is a relic of the misguided Cross Florida Barge Canal that was de-authorized in the early 1970's. Due to the dam, many miles of the river became the Rodman Reservoir, drowning many freshwater springs and forested lands and costing taxpayers every year since to manage both the dam and the

reservoir. A free-flowing river would not only save money, it would allow the migration of many species, including manatees and fish, and aid the local economy with increased tourism.

Please note our annual **Wild Florida Sweepstakes** has begun for 2021; please play to support FWF. We are also now delivering a monthly newsletter to in-boxes across the state.

As we continue to strive to keep Florida a special place to call home, please know we truly appreciate your help. We could not do it without you.



Featured Animal

Florida Native – Florida Scrub Jay

The Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) is a blue-gray bird that exists only in low-growing scrub on sandy soils, such as the remnants of ancient dunes in Central Florida. A very social bird, it lives in extended family groups, with younger birds helping their parents raise newer arrivals. To ward off predators, such as hawks, the family assigns a sentinel to give a call when danger is near. A non-migratory species, they live all year in their home ranges and are very inquisitive as to humans. They are also long-lived for small birds, many living up to 10 years. Development and other land conversions have severely limited where these jays can survive, and it is now on the federal endangered species list. Permanent conservation of our scrublands will provide critical habitats for these rare birds.



Photographer: Thea M. Hein-Mathen Location: Rockledge



No-Dig Gardening

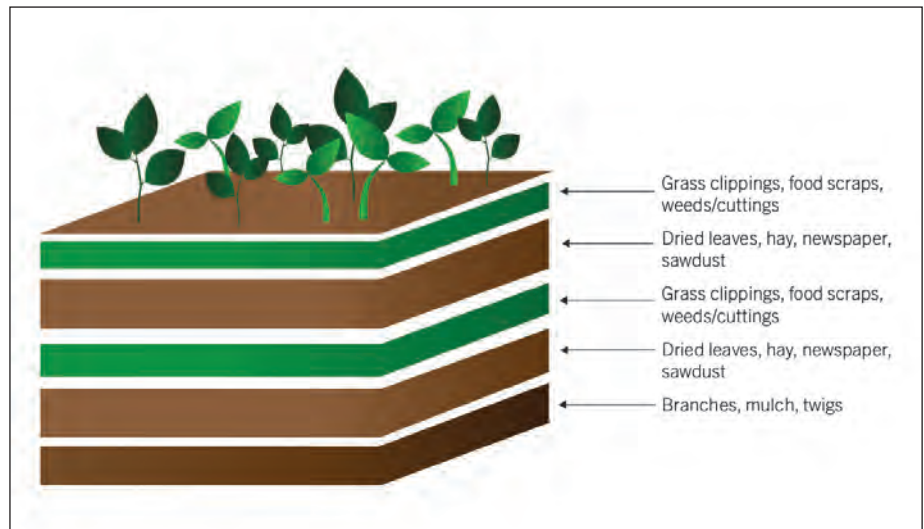
Gardeners are often outside working the soil – digging, tilling, amending, fertilizing. We love it, but sometimes it can be back-straining work! What if we could garden in ways that resemble more closely how Nature works?

Plants need healthy soil to thrive. More than just dirt, soil is a complex ecosystem of organisms; earthworms, insects, bacteria, fungi and other microbes are necessary for a healthy environment. All that digging and turning can disturb the balance of these essential organisms and the soil ecology.



Cabbages

Tilling and digging have long been used to break up hard-packed soil, start new garden beds or make it easier to pull up weeds. Gardeners often “turn” the soil at the beginning of a new planting season to add amendments and fertilizers. The digging can destroy microorganisms in the upper soil layers by exposing them to the



Lasagna gardening illustration. Bek Diamond, ©2019, Clemson University

sun’s rays and letting them dry out. As essential organisms are lost, more amendments, particularly fertilizers, are needed at every planting. Fertilizers, even organic ones, can change the balance of elements in the soil.

Proponents of no-dig gardening, sometimes called lasagna gardening, point to healthy forests, where trees and plants thrive without outside help. Layers of fallen leaves, twigs, and branches provide mulch that is eventually broken down by soil organisms, providing nutrients for trees and plants.

A lasagna garden uses alternating layers of “brown” materials like leaves, pine needles or straw, to provide carbon, and “greens” like veggie and fruit scraps, grass clippings or coffee grounds, to provide nitrogen. It’s like making a big composting pile

in a garden bed, without digging. Worms show up, do the digging for us, and build topsoil in the process. Worm castings are also rich in



Green tree frog in mustard greens

nutrients that nourish plants.

All the soil organisms work together to break down organic matter and provide nutrients to plants. A good top layer of mulch is maintained, so the soil always stays covered. The moisture in the soil is increased, and rainwater run-off is decreased.

At planting time, the mulch is pulled back just enough to add plants and seeds, disturbing the soil as little as possible. To harvest vegetables, some proponents recommend cutting plants at soil level, leaving the roots to decompose; some even suggest “harvesting” weeds in the same way or piling lots of mulch on them to slow down growth. Once a year, a thin layer of manure, compost or even worm castings can be added, and of course, more mulch.

Not all conservation happens on a large scale. What we do in our yards and gardens can always make a difference. These layered, gently-tended beds can maintain soil



Squash

structure and fertility, retain moisture, reduce pests, protect topsoil and sequester carbon in the soil. One garden bed might be small, but imagine the benefits of lasagna gardens across the community!

Ready to experiment with the no-dig method? You might consider starting with a section of an existing garden bed; maybe try starting with what is easiest to

grow in your area. Planting perennials and herbs can bring pollinators for an added benefit. It might take some learning by trial and error – but gardening always does.

More information on no-dig gardening can be found at:

<https://deepgreenpermaculture.com/diy-instructions/no-dig-gardening/>
<https://insteadof.com/blog/no-dig-gardening/>



Collards and rue



Disney Conservation Fund Grant to Aid in Panther Recovery

The Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to have been selected as a Disney Conservation Fund grant recipient this past year. The Fund is in its 25th year of supporting organizations dedicated to the protection of wildlife and their natural habitats. Earlier this year, and with the generous grant from Disney, the Federation kicked off an ambitious project that will aid in recovery of the highly endangered Florida panther.

The existence of the Florida panther today is an incredible conservation story that serves as a prime example of what can be accomplished through conservation and cooperation. In the 1980-1990s, the panther population had dropped to only 20-30 individuals as a result of panther eradication efforts and widespread habitat loss. Without intervention, extinction of the Florida panther was imminent. Genetic rescue was required and came in the form of eight female cougars translocated from Texas in 1995. Legal protections, genetic restoration, habitat and prey conservation measures all helped the panther population to recover, yet it remains one of the most endangered cats in the world, and our work conserving the panther is far from complete. Humans are impacting more wildlife and more wild spaces with every day that passes. We must



Panther and two kittens; FGCU Wings of Hope Panther Posse Camera

continue with our conservation efforts so that this big cat remains part of the Florida landscape.

Disney is also funding an Artificial Intelligence (AI) project that relies on the most current technology to process and analyze images from camera-traps. Camera-traps are commonly used to survey wildlife presence and the Federation has relied on camera-trap data to conduct several wildlife studies. The primary project goal is to develop an efficient and accurate AI model to increase processing speed of data for use in estimating population densities throughout the panther range. The produced AI model will benefit any researcher conducting a camera-trap study in the South as it will be geared to recognize a suite of local species.

Since receiving funding, the Federation has contracted with Dr. Daniel Smith with the University of Central Florida (UCF). To ensure the work on this project is robust,

Dr. Smith has coordinated with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff working on panther conservation and recovery, the UCF ComputerVision Lab and other experts working with Artificial Intelligence Computer Modeling Systems. The Federation is honored to have the Disney Conservation Fund

supporting this effort. Please note that while this project is underway, the Federation is still seeking matching funds to ensure the output is as comprehensive as possible.

Kindly visit

<https://floridawildlifefederation.org/donate/> to help support this project.

Sharing the Landscape is Awarded Generous Gift

Do you remember Gunner, the small Cavalier King Charles spaniel who was saved from the jaws of an alligator by his owner, Rick? The footage that went viral in November of last year was captured as part of a Federation wildlife-coexistence project called "Sharing the Landscape." Thankfully Gunner and Rick had only minor injuries, and the gator continues to live life in the same retention pond. Incidents like these are far too common and sometimes they do not have such a happy ending. The Federation released the video to the public with

a targeted message: homeowners need to respect wildlife and dogs need to be kept on a leash and people and pets should not linger by the edge of waterbodies where alligators reside.

With the media attention from the Gunner and Rick incident, there has been an increased interest in the Sharing the Landscape project from homeowners and other residents who also live at the edge of wildlife habitat.

The Federation received a generous donation from Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) through its charitable arm the NextEra Energy Foundation. This gift will fund project expansion into more communities across Southwest Florida as well as solar-powered camera equipment and cloud-based storage.

The Federation has worked closely with FPL in years past, specifically during the planning phase of their Hammock Solar Energy Center (Center) located near

*“ We must
continue with
our conservation
efforts so that this
big cat remains part
of the Florida
landscape. ”*

LaBelle. As the Sunshine State, we should be the leader in solar energy development and use. The Center produces enough zero-emission energy to power about 15,000 homes. Since the Federation supports clean energy and renewable energy initiatives, we welcomed the opportunity to engage with FPL during the planning phase of this solar field. Not only was there an

opportunity to work on a clean energy project, but FPL recognized the importance of habitat connectivity and the need for its solar fields to “share the landscape” with wildlife. In that regard, the Center avoided impacts to wetlands and other sensitive areas. Additionally, the site employs panther-friendly fencing that allows wildlife to move freely across the area. This means panthers and other wildlife are able to traverse the fence and, therefore, the site does not fragment important habitat areas. It truly embodies the spirit of the Federation’s Sharing the Landscape project.

The generous support from FPL will expand the Federation’s project reach and will help promote the need to share landscapes across the state.

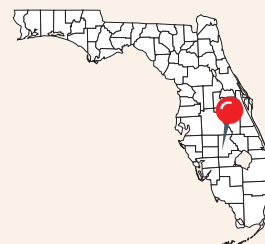
Do you want to support this wildlife coexistence initiative? Visit www.floridawildlife-federation.org/sharing-the-landscape/ to learn more.



Featured Natural Area

Archbold Biological Station

Protecting the ancient sand dunes of south-central Florida, the Archbold Biological Station in Highlands County, Florida was established in 1941 to provide a site for research. Since then, it has regrown to over 5,000 acres of ecologically sensitive scrub habitats. Many extremely rare native species reside here, including the inquisitive scrub jay, and prescribed fire is used to maintain environmental integrity. While research is the main focus of the site, and staff scientists utilize the lands as a living laboratory, students from kindergarten to graduate school frequent Archbold to learn about the scrublands and the 19 federally listed species that call it home. The land also provides cleansing to the waters which drain southward to Lake Okeechobee. Location: 123 Main Dr., Venus, FL 33960; 863 465-2571. (Call ahead for opening times).





Prescribed Fire

Some years ago, I was speaking to a group about management of Tallahassee's publicly owned Greenway and began to discuss the use of prescribed fire. When asked how much it costs to do these prescribed burns, I gave an average per acre price at the time. Immediately, a grumpy old man in the audience exclaimed that such an inexpensive number was ridiculous, and that he could not even mow his lawn for that low of a price.

To give you an idea as to what it costs to prescribe burn today, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has payments that certain landowners can apply for to help them prescribe burn; these payments are designed to cover 50% of the total cost. This year the payment for the average rural landowner is \$22.62 per acre. The USDA offers this help because burning is in everyone's best interest to help get fuels under control to reduce the likelihood of uncontrollable wildfires.

So how much does it cost to keep a yard mowed? Most yards are smaller than an acre and yet it costs more than \$20 to mow them. According to a quick informal survey with a couple of Master Gardeners, it cost them about \$1,000 per year or about \$50.00 per time to have their lawns mowed.

Quite simply, prescribed fire is the cheapest and best way for managers of more wild areas to keep combustible fuels at safer levels. The controlled fires also benefit many species of wildlife which is why you see quail hunting plantations burn on a one to three year interval. Many bird species such as bobwhite quail



Setting a fire on a plowed line helps keep the fire contained. Photo by Stan Rosenthal.



A slow moving prescribed burn keeps fire danger low. Photo by Paul Ray.

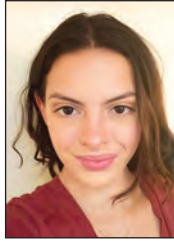
and turkeys do not do well in dense woods. They need easy access to the plants and insects at ground level and a dense, unburned, overgrown area is not suitable for that.

Additionally, we have many plants such as wiregrass and longleaf pines that have evolved to tolerate frequent low intensity fires. Some species, including wiregrass, need these fires to occur in the early growing season (May-June) to stimulate seed production so they can reproduce.

Wildlife and plants aside, it is cheaper in the short run not to prescribe burn. The problem is that every year you do not burn the fuels just keep building up. At some point, if these unburned areas catch on fire, they are a lot more difficult to control. I spent a fair amount of my young adult days as a forest firefighter and it is hard to imagine how hot and dangerous these wildfires can get.

Viera Wetlands

Since I have lived by the beach for most of my life, the ocean, sand, seagulls, and pelicans were the first thought that came to my mind when asked about wildlife. I did not look anywhere else near me for sights of nature as I was content with what was minutes away from me. Not until high school did I discover my favorite area to visit: the Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands.



Allison Ramos

During my last year of high school, I was assigned to write an essay about wildlife for my creative writing class. The teacher advised that we go to a location that we had never visited before. A few students in the class decided to go to the Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands, also known as the Viera Wetlands. When we arrived there, it looked like a painting. The sun was setting and its light created hues of yellow, pink, and purple in the sky and on the water. As the sun descended, the trees became silhouettes. I continued walking through the wetlands. There were ibises, egrets, and herons. Alligators were lying on the grass near the water. The sighting I will never forget from that visit was a spoonbill flying above me, and then seconds after, the silhouette of a flock of birds flying in the distance.

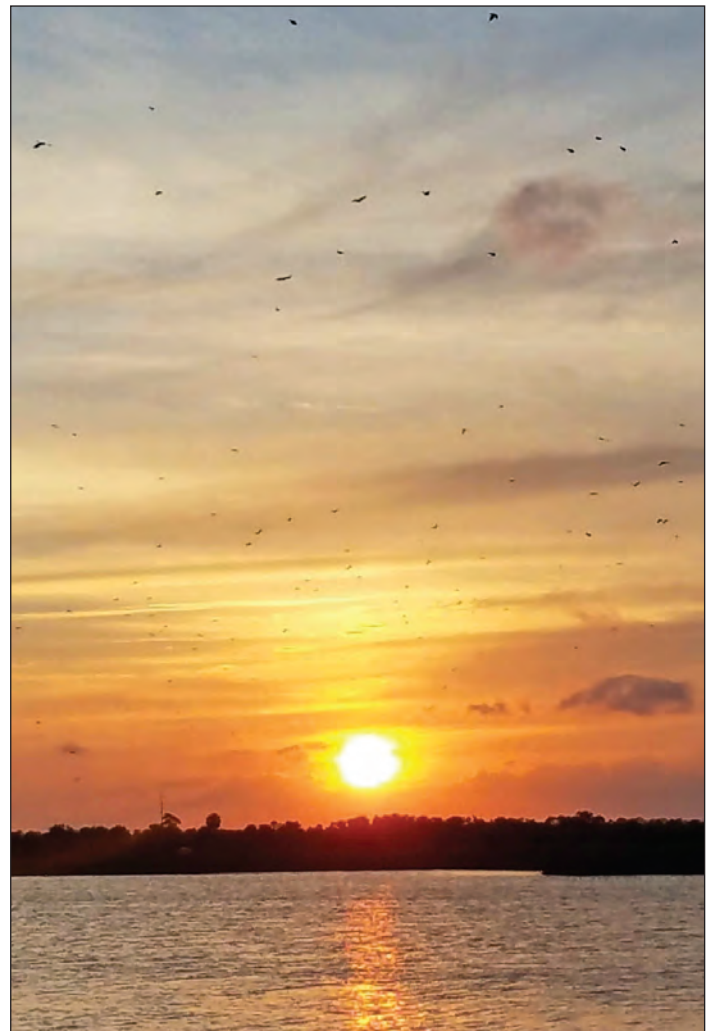
I was amazed by the wildlife at the Viera Wetlands, and though my poem about a spoonbill was not the best, I will forever be grateful for the assignment that guided me to this area.

Viví cerca de la playa la mayor parte de mi vida. El océano, la arena, las gaviotas y los pelícanos fueron los primeros pensamientos que me vinieron a la mente cuando me preguntaron sobre la vida silvestre. No busqué ningún otro lugar cercano a mí para ver la naturaleza, ya que estaba contenta con lo que estaba a minutos de mí. No fue hasta la escuela secundaria que descubrí mi área favorita para visitar: Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands.

Durante mi último año de secundaria, mi profesora me asignó escribir un poema sobre la naturaleza para mi clase de escritura creativa. Ella nos aconsejó que fuéramos a un lugar que nunca antes habíamos visitado. Algunos estudiantes de la clase

decidieron ir a Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands, también conocido como Viera Wetlands. Cuando llegamos a los humedales, parecía un cuadro. El sol se estaba poniendo y su luz creaba tonos de amarillo, rosa y morada en el cielo y en el agua. Cuando el sol descendió, los árboles se convirtieron en siluetas. Seguí caminando por los humedales. Había ibis, garcetas y garzas. Los caimanes yacían en la hierba cerca del agua. El avistamiento que nunca olvidaré de esa visita fue una espátula volando sobre mí, y luego segundos después, la silueta de una bandada de pájaros volando en la distancia.

Me sorprendió la vida salvaje en los humedales de Viera, y aunque mi poema sobre una espátula no fue el mejor, siempre estaré agradecido por la tarea que me guió a esta área.



Photographer: Allison Ramos Location: Viera Wetlands

2021 PHOTO CONTEST

FWF's 2021 Photo Contest

The Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to announce the seventh 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. Note that there are several categories which may be entered.

Members, supporters and friends of FWF are encouraged to enter, noting anyone may enter the contest with the exception of FWF staff. Entrants have an opportunity to win \$300 in cash or a Kindle Fire tablet! It has never been easier to capture images in Florida's outdoors – use your camera, smartphone, or tablet to document the wild world around you. Enter your most

compelling nature images and photos of Florida today at <https://floridawildlifeederation.org/>. Entries will be taken from now until December 31, 2021.

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 Kid's Contest winner will receive an outdoor backpack. Only digitally-uploaded images may be entered. Judging will follow the closing date of December 31, 2021.

Visit <https://floridawildlifeederation.org/> to get started. Contact FWF at (850) 656-7113 for more information.

Dolphin Study By Kent Morse

The Dolphin Study, a nonprofit effort devoted to the well-being of bottlenose dolphins resident to Southwest Florida, recently made available online the database of its ongoing photo-identification study.

The study, begun in 2006, revealed three distinct but overlapping communities of bottlenose dolphins in the vicinity of Marco Island. One community is centered around the Big Marco Pass on the northern end of the island. A second community to the south is centered around Caxambas Pass and Coon Key Pass. A third community confines itself to the nearshore waters of the open Gulf of Mexico, its members rarely venturing into the mangrove-fringed estuary occupied by the other two communities.

At www.thedolphinstudy.com, visitors can search the database, identify each of the individuals in these communities and glean insights about their ranging habits, association patterns and reproductive history.

The goal of The Dolphin Study is nearly identical to that of the *Sharing the*

Landscape Project, Florida Wildlife Federation's collaboration with the fStop Foundation to place cameras in the backyards of homes adjacent to wild lands. As with that project, we seek to elevate the conversation about how humans and wildlife can best share the same landscape, or in this case, seascape.



Kent Morse

Florida's nearshore coastal waters are wilderness areas where species like the bottlenose dolphin have lived for generations. They are also magnets for a growing number of humans to work and recreate. Because these dolphins are resident to the area and a source of fascination for humans there will be interactions.

There is a real need for a conversation about the nature of these

continued on next page



Dolphins playing.



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, 25 for \$100, and 50 for \$125 (the best value). Watch for your sweepstakes tickets in the mail or go online to floridawildlifefederation.org.

Dolphin Study *continued*

interactions. Daily harassment from human activities is adding to the challenges these dolphins face as they attempt to feed, socialize and care for their young. Serious and fatal injuries from contact with recreational fishing gear and boats are increasing.

Live dolphin shows have indelibly implanted in the popular imagination the perception of dolphins as entertainers. *Flipper*, a television show about a rather solitary dolphin whose closest bonds were with humans, shaped a generation's conception of the species.

Unfortunately, this popular perception often informs how we

interact with wild dolphins in their natural habitat. We want to interact with man's sea-going friends and elicit a response from them. At best this involves harassment, and it can result in serious injury to the animal.

By documenting the local dolphins and highlighting the challenges they face, the Dolphin Study is trying to popularize a more profound understanding of dolphins as wild animals engaged in the difficult work of survival and worthy of both our respect and the protections afforded them under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.



Dolphin following a boat.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE **Kids' Quiz**

by Marney Richards

1. Do you know small creatures that can turn tons of soil without even using a shovel?



2. This beautiful red bird, with a black mask and throat, is a found throughout Florida.



3. Have you seen a plant that resembles grass, with tiny star-shaped blue flowers and a yellow center?



*See page 14 for answers
and more information.*

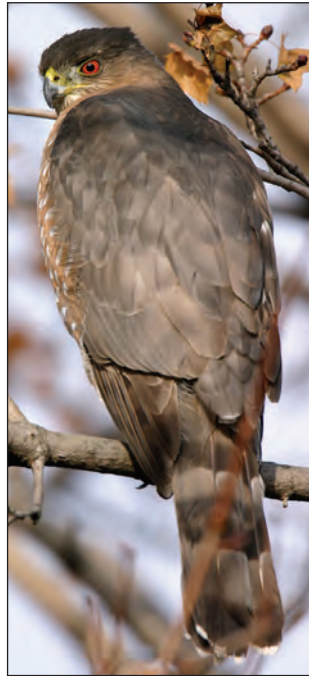
Through a Bird's Eye View

By Sharon Denise Scott

The less I focus the more I see. When I still my mind it stops filtering. I capture the striking beauty of birds. There are many varieties of birds to watch that fly against the expanse of the heavens. As I watch hawks moving along the visible plane of heaven I am enthralled with delight. I am mesmerized at the sheer magnificence of these birds. They glide without flapping their wings and soar along the visible atmosphere. A Cooper's hawk is a type of raptor. It is found throughout North America. The cotton fields of South Georgia have the type of prey hawks feed on and serve as a food chain.

I was born and raised in Thomas County, Georgia. My grandmother lived in the country. I spent most of my teenage years visiting her and developed a fondness for the deep country and the many bird species in the area. My grandfather owned acres of land in Patten, Georgia. He farmed and grew cotton. I saw Cooper's hawks whenever I wandered in the deep woods. Cotton fields are stunning and beautiful to view. I always marvel at the cotton fields whenever I drive back home. My grandparents have passed on. There is nothing left but land and the beautiful cotton fields that fill the grounds.

Early this year, I drove to the country and had the golden opportunity to observe a pair of Cooper's hawks as they watched for an incautious squirrel. As the hawks stood guard, I slowed my pace and quietly circled them to get a close view. I saw a masterwork of tapered wings, sharp claws, and dark brilliant eyes. The birds were looking in the opposite direction



Animal: Cooper's hawk

from me. I kept my gaze and took in the stirring beauty of these birds. I was transported for a moment into their world. The birds did not move, as they knew the mission was to seize prey. After about a couple of minutes, the female hawk flew away and landed in a maple tree. I saw the squirrel hanging between closed talons. The male soon followed his mate, and away they flew.

My day was complete. I drove away with sheer delight. I realized the beauty I saw when I stopped my mind from filtering. I saw through a bird's eye view.

Cooper's hawk Conservation - Although Cooper's Hawks declined in the mid-20th century because of human persecution and the use of DDT, the species has recovered remarkably well. Regrettably, Cooper's hawks are still a frequent victim of collisions. This hawk and dozens of other bird species collide

with glass, with up to one billion birds perishing each year in the United States alone. (See a 2014 study on birds and glass and glass collisions.) Poorly sited wind turbines are another source of bird mortality. Other resources:

<https://abcbirds.org/bird/coopers-hawk/>

<https://blog.nature.org/science/2018/12/31/why-youre-seeing-more-hawks-at>

Author's notes: Sharon Denise Scott lives in Tallahassee, Florida with her husband, Nathan Scott. Shawnya Hick, Library Services Specialist, helped prepare this manuscript.

Answers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

1. Earthworms are very efficient diggers. There can be millions of earthworms in an acre of land and they can turn over 50 tons of soil in a year. They have no bones, no eyes or ears but sense their way feeling vibrations. They have 2 layers of muscles, one running lengthwise, the other going around the body. They are sensitive to temperature and touch, and the sun's ultraviolet rays are harmful to them.

2. The **Northern cardinal** is easy to recognize with distinctive color and markings. The male is bright red, the female is pale brown with reddish wings, tail and crest. Both have black around their red bills. Cardinals sit low in shrubs and trees, and forage near or on the ground. Adults eat many different insects, seeds and berries, and feed their young mostly with insects.

3. Pointed blue-eyed-grass is a native perennial that grows in meadows, open woods, along grassy roadsides and often in gardens. They bloom in mid-spring and are beneficial to a variety of bees attracted to their nectar and pollen.

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Photographer: Ben Aranas Animal: Pileated Woodpecker
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Photographer: Matt Williams Animal: Red Fox Location: Tallahassee



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