



Florida Fish & Wildlife News

Volume 37, Issue 1
Winter 2022

Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

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The Time is Now

Last November some friends and I made our annual trek to Brooksville to appreciate rural tranquility combined with spirited open-air music. We also had the opportunity to visit nearby Withlacoochee River Park, an oasis of preservation surrounded by new development including an I-75 intersection that looked like it had been dropped from a helicopter the day before. This pattern of scattershot development is being replicated all over our state, spurred by the arrival of nearly 1,000 new inhabitants per day.

One would hope that with the influx of these new residents there would be a commensurate legislative interest in land conservation. We know that over 75% of Florida voters recognized the importance of land preservation by backing Amendment 1 in 2014 to fund the Land Acquisition Trust Fund and thereby the Florida Forever program. This fund was to provide for dedicated annual revenue stemming from real estate transactions – so the more development, the more land could be saved to make up for the loss of open space, wetlands and habitats. If the Legislature had done as the votes asked, many hundreds of millions of dollars would be available in any given year for conservation and that sum would still be less than 1% of the annual state budget. Moreover, no tax increases are involved.

The state now has upwards of approximately \$9 billion in reserve, much of which came from the federal government. Shouldn't substantial

funding be provided immediately towards the purchase of public lands and the permanent protection of private land from willing sellers? The price of land conservation goes up with every year, so the time to act is now.

“75% of Florida voters recognized the importance of land preservation.”

One bill in 2022 Legislative Session proposes \$100 million for the Florida Forever program. While a good start, this falls far short of what the voters asked for. At the time of the writing of this article, I don't know what amount will be set aside for land conservation by our elected leaders. But if recent past is a barometer, at best it will be a relative pittance at a time when the state's coffers are overflowing.

Given the current surplus, the time is now for the Florida Legislature to fully fund Florida Forever and follow the lead of its constituents who have overwhelmingly supported this bipartisan initiative.



Cover Photo

Photographer: Russ Burch

Title: Foggy Morning, Location: Live Oak

Spring creek joining the Suwannee River in Suwannee River State Park, Live Oak, Florida.



Florida Fish & Wildlife News

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Title: Foggy Morning; Photographer: Russ Burch Location: Live Oak – Spring creek joining the Suwannee River in Suwannee River State Park, Live Oak, Florida.

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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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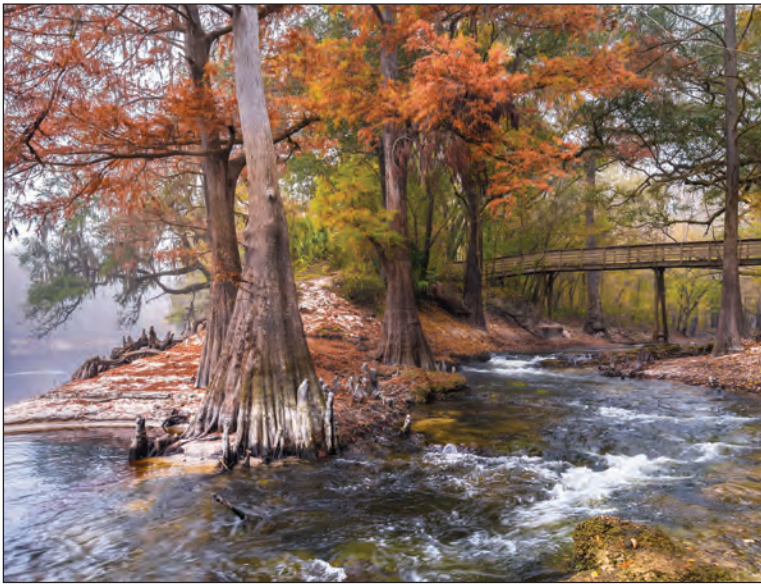
2021 PHOTO CONTEST

2021 Photo Contest Winners

Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to announce the winners of our 2021 Photo Contest. It was a pleasure to see these depictions of Nature.

Thank you to all the photographers who entered. You will find other winning photos from the contest throughout this publication.

Visit www.floridawildlife federation.org/photo-contest/ to view the winners online and we hope you enter the contest in 2022!



Cover Image – 2021 Photo Contest Winner

First Place - Landscape

Photographer: Russ Burch

Title: Foggy Morning

Location: Live Oak

Description: Spring creek joining the Suwannee River in Suwannee River State Park, Live Oak, Florida.



Second Place - Birds

Photographer: Marie Laforge

Title: Water Dancer

Location: Englewood

Animal: Great blue heron

Description: A magical moment in time. A beautiful sunrise at Stump Pass Beach State Park and a magical encounter with a majestic heron.





Our Water, Our Land, Our Florida

The 2022 Florida Legislative Session has begun and FWF is once again advocating for conservation. Even as our state grows in population, with more stress on our finite water and land resources, our elected leadership struggles to find answers to an ever-expanding list of environmental concerns. Many of these problems end up costing taxpayers many millions of dollars to rectify and we continually end up mitigating what should have been stopped at inception.

Contamination by nitrogen and phosphorous is an example of pollution that is causing harmful algae blooms in our freshwater lakes, rivers and ponds. Polluted water from septic tanks, lawns and farm fields feeds microscopic algae in our freshwaters. This algae expands quickly in size, absorbing the oxygen in the water column and killing aquatic species such as fish. As it grows, the algae bloom also blocks sunlight to submerged vegetation, killing them as well. What is left are stagnant slime-filled pools, not what we as Floridians want, not what native species need to survive. In many cases of water pollution, the public purse is then used to try and clean up the mess and restore what was an ecological jewel. This seems like a backward scenario. Shouldn't the laws make it difficult to pollute in the first place so that the rest of us do not have to pay for the pollution caused by others?

Of particular benefit to cleaning our water would be saving our beloved manatees, which have died off in droves this year due to

starvation. Algal mats have filled our estuaries, blocking sunlight to seagrasses that the manatees feed upon and thereby eliminating these plants. The sight of deceased, bloated manatees should make us all consider what we are doing wrong and correct it.

Water protection goes hand in hand with land conservation. The Sunshine State was once the shining example, not only nationally, but

“Water protection goes hand in hand with land conservation.”

internationally, of land conservation to protect our water, wildlife, open space and quality of life. Floridians of all political stripes supported programs like Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever, so much so that when funding was slashed a few years ago, 75% of voters said yes to a state constitutional amendment to fully fund land conservation in the face of mounting development pressure. Sadly, our leaders in Tallahassee have not abided by this will of the people and continue to ignore this mandate.

Permanently protected natural lands not only provide essential habitat for iconic species such as the panther, black bear and gopher tortoise, but serve to cleanse water before it seeps into our aquifer and waterways. As eco-tourism grows as an economic driver, these areas also serve as job-producing centers. These

programs also protect agricultural and pasture lands, which provide jobs, food and open space, and saves our heritage.

Lastly, climate change is here, and as a low-lying peninsular state, we are at ground zero for its impacts. Rising seas and more frequent severe storms are now the norm. Even as we aim to lower carbon emissions, actions must be taken now to protect what we have.

Water and land issues should be the one thing our leaders can agree upon, no matter political registration. We are all Floridians and should strive to keep Florida a special place to call home.

Preston Robertson



Photographer: Lisa Burger; Title: Glorious Old Florida; Location: Cypress Gardens;

Description: I love to photograph trees, and there is no tree more fascinating than a banyan! Banyan tree started in a five gallon bucket in the 1930's and planted at Cypress Gardens, which is now part of Legoland.





Join Us! **Annual Meeting**

Marriott Resort Hutchinson Island

Stuart, Florida

June 4, 2022

*More details to come at
www.floridawildlifefederation.org*



Photographer: Prathima T. Vamanlal; Title: Fishing and Recreation; Location: Lochloosa Lake; Description: A family enjoying fishing in a beautiful sunset at the lake. 🌈



Growth Management and the Environment: St. Johns County

The time for land protection is now. The population of St. Johns County has increased 44% over the last 10 years and the county is projected to exceed nearly 600,000 residents by the year 2070. With this overwhelming growth comes a greater demand for water and the development of rural and natural lands for urban use. Indeed, St. Johns is the state's second fastest growing county.

In 2014, 75% of Florida voters passed the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative to provide adequate resources for land protection. In St. Johns County, 72% voted in favor of the initiative sending a clear message that residents value natural lands and clean waters.

From small conservation easements within developments to larger conservation tracts managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), approximately one-third (185,121 acres) of St. Johns County is in conservation. That said, an additional 78,000 +/- acres are proposed for conservation in Florida Forever projects. These lands provide habitat for wildlife, flood control, sea-level rise resilience and public recreation. Most importantly, these lands serve as an amazing tool to manage growth if done comprehensively and pro-actively.

At a recent growth management workshop, County transportation planners reported on the number of critically deficient roadway segments, as well as the costs to fix

them. Based on committed traffic, the County is looking at a \$730 million backlog. How will the county pay for these projects? Will taxpayers be left fixing the problem or will the county make development pay for itself? There is already talk of a sales tax referendum to fund this transportation backlog. Over 13 years ago, 55% of the voters rejected a one cent sales tax in 2008. That referendum started out as a land conservation referendum, but the County commission added transportation projects as a recipient of the potential funds generated.


When looking for land to accommodate infrastructure, we have seen efforts to use existing conservation lands as "cheaper" options. In the past, Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) has blocked several proposals to do just that. In 2014, a map was circulated proposing a four-lane highway through the middle of the public's Twelve Mile Swamp Conservation Area. The road alignment was apparently put there at the behest of a group of landowners who envisioned the road opening up their properties to development. Roads are not the only infrastructure posing a threat to our conservation lands. We also see proposals for other public facilities like schools. Under the leadership of the late Steve O'Hara, FWF blocked the siting of a new public school within the Guana River Wildlife Management Area. A school located within the wildlife

management area would have impacted the ability to manage the ecosystem with prescribed burns and impeded public recreational opportunities. Educational facilities are no doubt important - this was just the wrong place to site one.

To prevent haphazard fragmentation of our conservation lands, we need to ensure meaningful standards are built into our comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations. FWF is working with conservation partners, County staff and the community to recommend the following:

- Revising the Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Planned Rural Development (PRD) language;
- Advocating for additional long-term open space conservation policies that focus on functioning natural systems that reduce the possibilities of flood damage and water supply shortages, provide habitat protection and enhance numerous rare species and imperiled natural communities;
- Ensuring conservation lands continue to provide critical ecosystem services such as capturing, storing, filtering, and slowly releasing clean water into our waterways; and
- Mobilizing support for local Florida Forever projects – the Ocala to Matanzas Wildlife Corridor, the Northeast Florida Blueways and the St. Johns Riverway.



Photographer: Richard King; Title: Sereniti; Location: Orlando; Description: Island reflection in one of the ponds at Split Oak Forest. 



Featured Animal

Florida Native – Gulf Sturgeon

An ancient species some 200 million years in existence, the sturgeon is an enormous fish that can reach eight feet in length and up to 200 pounds. The Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) is one of three sturgeon species that occur in Florida, the others being the Atlantic and Shortnose. A federally-listed threatened species, the Gulf Sturgeon generally resides in the rivers of the Panhandle, especially the Suwannee. Sturgeon move out to the Gulf as juveniles and return to the river as adults to spawn. As bottom feeders, they consume crustaceans and mollusks. These fish can be hazardous to boaters as they are apt to leap out of the water, apparently to refill their swim bladders with oxygen or to communicate with other sturgeon.





Forever Florida with Florida Forever

Quality of life in Florida is supported by the environment, from the rare freshwater springs of North Florida to the Everglades ecosystem. The Florida Forever program protects environmentally sensitive lands that are vital to water resources and provides habitat for an array of wildlife, including the endangered Florida panther and the Florida black bear.

The state's economy, too, is sustained by Florida's unique environment, with jobs created by outdoor recreational opportunities and a thriving tourism industry that relies heavily on Nature. This was made all too clear when Southwest Florida saw the detrimental impacts of blue-green algae on our coastlines over the last several years.

Many of the state forests and parks enjoyed today were saved by Florida Forever. Portions of Collier County's beloved Picayune Strand State Forest were acquired through this program. But more protected land is needed in the face of rampant development. With the state's population growing by up to 1,000 new residents a day, now is the time to preserve natural Florida for current and future generations.

Several Florida Forever priority projects are located in this region. This includes land within the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) that, if protected, will ensure habitat connections between three conservation areas and protect the flow of water feeding the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand and other areas. Devil's Garden, located in Hendry County, is another important priority project which, if protected, would not only preserve a significant corridor for the panther's northward expansion, but will provide water resources beneficial to both the

Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress National Preserve.

Florida Forever had been around for quite some time; it was initially launched in 2001 as a replacement for Preservation 2000, and was once the largest land conservation acquisition program of its kind in the United States. Funding for this program originally came from a third of real estate documentary fees, but this was greatly reduced after the Great Recession. And even as Florida's economy recovered from the economic downturn, funding for Florida Forever never bounced back. And so, a coalition of conservation groups, including the Florida Wildlife Federation, garnered the support needed to restore funding for the program in a ballot measure known as Amendment 1.

A little over 7 years ago, Floridians voted overwhelmingly in support of Amendment 1 – with over 75% voter approval. Since then, the State should have had seven years of consistent and full funding for Florida Forever —

unfortunately, this has not been the case. The Legislature has not fulfilled the will of the people in this state and has failed to fully fund Florida Forever since that 2014 amendment.

All of the priority projects in Southwest Florida and across the state are critical; but without adequate funding, the state's most environmentally significant areas may never get preserved. The people of Florida, who voted to support this program, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, who run this program, certainly understand the incredible value of protecting wild Florida. The Legislature, however, does not seem to share the same appreciation for land conservation nor value voter input. Florida Wildlife Federation continues to ensure the Legislature is reminded that the people of Florida demanded full funding for Florida Forever in 2014 and will continue to remind them until they listen.



Photographer: Bonnie Masdeu; Title: Swamp Hibiscus; Location: Delray Beach; Description: This Swamp Hibiscus could be seen from the boardwalk, just out of reach and was glowing in the sunlight. The Swamp Hibiscus can be found in the wetlands of Florida.



Conservation Collier Set to Add Over 1,000 acres to its Inventory

With the Conservation Collier program being approved by the voters in 2020 by over 77%, the County is moving forward with its first major acquisition list called 'Cycle 10.' The Conservation Collier committee found themselves in a challenging situation when they had more parcels that merit acquisition than they had funding available. Although having about \$14 million available, the full Cycle 10 list has many ecologically important parcels that have a value of about \$30 million. FWF provided public testimony to support the parcels in Cycle 10 and the committee voted to recommend acquiring approximately 750 acres.

The Cycle 10 list includes several parcels that would expand existing preserves that are critical to the

Southwest region like the 20 parcels in Horsepen Strand (a wetland system near Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary). Also under consideration is a 750-acre tract known as Big Hammock that is adjacent to the Pepper Ranch Preserve and Lake Trafford, and parcels to expand the Gore preserve, which is located in an area known to be important for panthers.

Properties on Marco Island with many documented gopher tortoise burrows are on the Cycle 10 list. Gopher tortoises are a state-listed species and one of the greatest threats to the gopher tortoise is development of their preferred upland habitats. This is because the gopher tortoise prefers open canopy, forested lands that have sandy and well-drained soils. Unfortunately, these are also the lands

preferred for human development. The small parcels on Marco Island being offered to the Conservation Collier program are very much at risk for development and the Conservation Collier program is playing a key role in protecting this important habitat for the species.

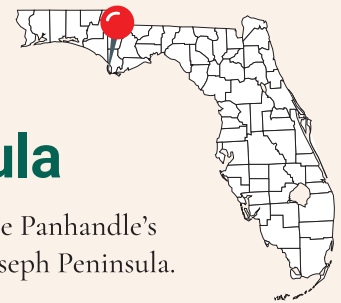
The Collier Board of County Commissioners (BCC) recently voted to add 1,100 acres of conservation lands from Cycle 10. This is an outstanding result and it is evident that the BCC understands that the people of Collier County voted to acquire, protect, restore, and manage environmentally sensitive lands for the benefit of present and future generations.



Featured Natural Area

Cape San Blas / St. Joseph Peninsula

Named by the Spanish as Bahia de San Jose in the 1600's, St. Joseph Bay in the Panhandle's Gulf County is bordered on the south and west by Cape San Blas and the St. Joseph Peninsula. With miles of sugar-white sandy beaches, these areas have been rated as one of the best in the nation for coast lovers. T.H. Stone Memorial State Park protects 1,700 acres at the northern end of the peninsula, and smaller parks dot the landscape. Over 240 bird species have been reported in the area, including Forster's tern, Bonaparte's gull, bald eagle and American avocet. Fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sunbathing and hiking are popular activities. The park suffered significant damage from Hurricane Michael in 2018. Currently the south end of the park, including the Maritime Hammock Nature Trail, is open for day use. 8899 Cape San Blas Rd., Port St. Joe, FL 32456; 850 227-1327.





Praying Mantis

The other day I was out with an inquisitive landowner, and she showed me something neither I nor she had seen before. This object didn't seem to fit the description of a bird nest, but it looked animal made and seemed to have a similar function. Maybe a cocoon for a butterfly?

I began my search by looking on my computer. Unfortunately, I didn't find anything. Next, I sent a picture of the object to a fellow forester who immediately identified it as a praying mantis egg case or ootheca. I would never have guessed that!

Identifying the object stimulated me into more study about this fascinating insect. I found that one of these cases could hold up to 300 eggs. To make this egg case, the female mantis will secrete a liquid from her ovipositor (a tubular organ through which a female insect deposits eggs). This liquid mixes with air to make a



Praying mantis egg case next to writing pen
Photographer: Stan Rosenthal.

froth that solidifies into a case as hard as a walnut shell around the eggs. The egg cases are deposited in fall, and the eggs overwinter in the hardened ootheca, which provides insulation and protection, especially from ants. The egg cases are usually attached to stems of shrubs and grasses; they are oblong in shape and about one inch long.

Praying mantises are of the order Mantodea and have over 2,400 species.

A single female mantis may produce several oothecae (the plural of ootheca) after mating just once. They have triangular heads, bulging eyes and flexible necks.

Depending on environmental variables and the species, the nymph-stage mantises take three to six months to emerge from the ootheca. In spring or early summer, the young praying mantises make their way out of the protective case, hungry and ready to hunt. They will eat many types of insects and even each other. They are a wonderful thing to have in your garden for natural pest control.

This exercise was another reminder that even if you spend substantial amounts of time in the great outdoors, there are always more cool things to learn about nature.

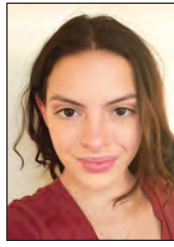
Stan Rosenthal is Forest Advocate with the Florida Wildlife Federation and Extension Agent Emeritus with UF/IFAS Leon Extension.



Photographer: Luis Forte; Title: Playalinda Beach Sunrise; Location: Cape Canaveral; Description: A spectacular sunrise from Playalinda Beach at Canaveral National Seashore. I set my tripod low and waited for the receding waves to create this composition. 🌅

Our State is Special

Florida is known for its climate, tourism, and beaches. It is easy to forget that not only does the Sunshine State have beautiful places to visit, but it also has wildlife that is special to the state. Two such iconic animals are the Key deer and the Florida Panther.



Alison Ramos

The Key deer, the smallest North American deer species, can be found in the Florida Keys. Most of these deer live on the island of Big Pine Key and can swim between the islands. They show very little fear of humans due to living close to where people reside. The Key deer eat over one hundred species of plants, but they mainly eat mangroves and thatch palm berries. Key deer can live between seven to nine years.

The Florida panther can be found only in South Florida. They are carnivorous and eat a variety of animals, ranging from mice to American alligators. Florida panthers are territorial and solitary, but tend to avoid human conflict. They live between eight to fifteen years in the wild.

While the Key deer and panther are unique to our state, they are sadly both endangered species. There are only 700-800 Key deer left and 120-230 Florida panthers remaining in the wild. It is important that conservation efforts continue to preserve the land in which these species live and to ensure that these wonderful animals do not become extinct.

Florida es conocida por su clima, turismo y playas. Es fácil olvidar que el Estado del Sol no solo tiene hermosos lugares para visitar, sino que también tiene vida silvestre que es especial para el estado. Dos animales que son especiales para el estado son el ciervo Key y la pantera de Florida.

El ciervo Key, la especie de ciervo más pequeña de América del Norte, se puede encontrar en los Cayos de Florida. La mayoría de los ciervos viven en la isla Big Pine Key y pueden nadar entre las islas, mostrando muy poco miedo a los humanos debido a que viven cerca de donde residen las personas. Los ciervos de Key comen más de cien especies de plantas, pero principalmente comen manglares y bayas de palma de paja. El ciervo Key puede vivir entre siete y nueve años.

La pantera de Florida se puede encontrar en el sur de Florida. Son carnívoros y comen variedades de animales, desde ratones hasta caimanes americanos. Las panteras de Florida son territoriales y solitarias, pero tienden a evitar los conflictos humanos. Viven entre ocho y quince años en estado salvaje.

Si bien estas criaturas son especiales para nuestro estado, ambas son especies en peligro de extinción. Quedan entre 700 y 800 ciervos de los Cayos y entre 120 y 230 panteras de Florida en estado salvaje. Es importante que los esfuerzos de conservación continúen para preservar la tierra en la que viven estas especies y garantizar que estos animales no se extingan



Photographer: Diane Lewis; Title: Queen Triplets; Location: Lecanto; Animal: Queen caterpillars; Description: Three queen caterpillars munching on a milkweed stem.





Gopher Tortoise Education

If you walk in Florida's pine sandhills, oak hammocks or coastal dune areas, which are some of the preferred habitats of gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*), you might be lucky enough to see one of these wonderful creatures. These terrestrial tortoises have been on our planet for 60 million years and are found throughout Florida.

Adapted for digging deep burrows in sandy soil, the tortoises spend much of their time underground, benefitting from stable temperatures and protection from drought, fire and predators. Not only do these burrows protect and house gopher tortoises, but they also provide shelter for over 350 other species including the Eastern indigo snake, Florida mouse, gopher frog and hundreds of invertebrates like beetles and crickets! This makes the gopher tortoise a keystone species – without the tortoise many other species would not survive.

Gopher tortoise populations have declined, primarily due to loss of their habitat. The gopher tortoise and its burrow are protected under state law, but as Florida continues to grow many species won't survive unless our state preserves and manages remaining upland and wetland areas and restores degraded habitat. FWF continues to promote habitat conservation and appropriate land use and management practices.

As part of FWF's effort to inform the public about gopher tortoises, we developed educational signs. Thanks to the generosity of FWF supporters,



FWF's coastal tortoise signage

in recent years we were able to distribute over 250 signs which have been posted in natural areas like state and county parks, forests, beaches and nature preserves.

We now have updated signs to distribute to public partners across the state! Palm Beach County was one of the first recipients of the newly designed signs. FWF also partnered with Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, Loggerhead Marinelife Center and the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources to host a press event with the local CBS news affiliate. The event featured a sea turtle replica and a live gopher tortoise to show the differences between the two, and a couple of extra guests including an indigo snake named Coco.

In Southwest Florida, Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Land and Water Trust recently posted new signs at Marsh Trail and Cypress Dome Trail. CREW's educational programs highlight the importance of gopher tortoises in the ecosystem. In one such program, hundreds of 2nd and

3rd graders visit each year and learn the importance of fire in the ecosystem and how wildlife, including gopher tortoises, are well adapted to and depend on fire.

Florida is blessed with wildlife and natural areas found nowhere else. To ensure these wonders are here for future generations to enjoy, protecting our natural lands is essential. Please visit our website to learn more about the gopher

tortoise and efforts to protect this essential part of Florida's wild landscape:

<https://floridawildlifeederation.org/gopher-tortoise/>



A new uplands sign is placed



FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S *Wild Florida Sweepstakes*

Congratulations to the Winner of the 2021 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 16, 2021 at FWF headquarters, 2545 Blairstone Pines Dr., Tallahassee, FL and was supervised by Carroll and Co., Inc., Certified Public Accountants.

Jim Pettus was the lucky Grand Prize winner for 2021. We thank Mr. Pettus and all those folks who entered the Sweeps!

Proceeds from the sweepstakes will be used right here in Florida to pursue vital programs from Pensacola to Key West including land acquisition through the Florida Forever Program, private land conservation, wetlands protection, clean air, and water initiatives, responsible outdoor recreation, Everglades restoration, and stewardship of our fish and wildlife resources.



Preston Robertson (FWF President and CEO) and Stephen Roeder (Carroll and Co., Inc.) with the winning sweepstakes ticket.

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

When you Start With a Smile, we can facilitate wildlife crossings statewide which protect wildlife and humans.

Visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-1398265> to sign up!



FLORIDA WILDLIFE *Kids' Quiz*

by Marney Richards

- 1.** This black bird can be identified by its red shoulder patches and a distinctive song.



- 2.** Do you know a tree with waxy berries that was once harvested to make candles?



- 3.** What fish in Florida waters has a flat body and both eyes on the same side?



*See page 14 for answers
and more information.*

18th Annual Crawfordville Arbor Day

Nearly 700 native trees were given away to Wakulla County residents on Saturday, January 22, 2022. Participants drove north along Ocklockonee Street next to Hudson Park, placed an order for two trees, then had them loaded in their vehicle. Crawfordville Arbor Day is a partnership between the Wakulla County Garden Club, the National Wildlife Federation, the Florida Wildlife Federation, the Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and other community organizations. *Photos and text by Claudia Farren.*



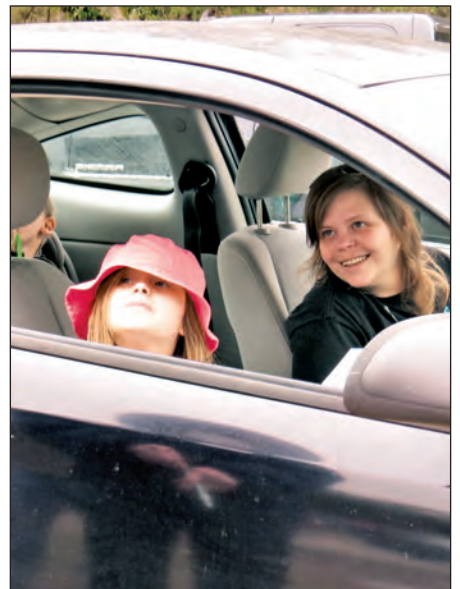
John Alcorn delivers a free baby tree into a waiting vehicle at the drive-thru giveaway in Crawfordville on January 22nd.



Marney Richards and other volunteers assemble educational packets from NWF, FWF and a Tree Planting & Care handout the afternoon before the Arbor Day tree giveaway.



With funds from the National Wildlife Federation's Trees for Wildlife program, the Wakulla County Garden Club bought bareroot seedlings from a Florida wholesale native plant nursery. They were planted in pots in February 2021 and nurtured for a year by garden club members at Just Fruits and Exotics Nursery.



Many children came to the 18th annual event to help their parents pick out a tree for their yard.

Answers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

1. Male red-winged blackbirds have bright red shoulder patches which are very apparent, especially when singing. Females are streaky brown with a hint of red on their shoulders. These blackbirds are found throughout Florida, mostly in marshes, wet meadows and fields. They feed on insects and seeds, and sometimes at backyard feeders. Their song is described as a musical trill – once you know it you can easily identify this bird.

2. The wax myrtle, sometimes called Southern bayberry, is a native evergreen shrub or small tree that thrives in full sun and well-drained sandy soils. The gray-blue berries were used by early settlers to make wax for candles. Wax myrtles are host plants for butterflies and its berries provide food for birds.

3. The Southern flounder lives in bays and estuaries, sometimes moving into tidal creeks and freshwater. Strong teeth help the flounder feed on smaller fish. Their ability to camouflage by changing colors helps them avoid predators.

How Did You Do, Florida Kid?

Call for 2022 Board Director Nominations

Interested in joining the Board of Directors of the Florida Wildlife Federation or nominating someone else? Please write to the Florida Wildlife Federation Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870 or email Michelle Forman at michelle@fwfonline.org. Nominations must be submitted by April 23, 2022.

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

reside anywhere within the state.

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



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Florida’s wildlife, habitat,
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Florida Fish & Wildlife News

Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation



Photographer: Edith Lassonde; Title: Blue Jay Couple Taking Afternoon Bath; Location: Merritt Island; Animal: Eastern Blue Jay;
Description: Cute little couple. This blue jay couple loves their afternoon bath in our backyard. 🌈