



Florida Fish & Wildlife News

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Florida Wildlife Federation – Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

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Chair's Message

Joe Atterbury

Florida is Number One



No, I am not talking about the Gators. I am referring to a report from the Environmental Integrity Project which ranked our state first in the nation as to the highest total acres of lakes too polluted for swimming or healthy aquatic life. This report was based on Florida's 2020 water quality report filed with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It is not just our freshwater lakes, rivers and canals which are impaired. Florida ranks second for most total square miles of degraded estuaries, which were some of the nation's most diverse and productive.

Addressing the magnitude of our degraded waters requires increased efforts to put pressure on our local, state and federal level representatives. I recognize that our current elected officials did not create this mess. But they have inherited the responsibility to take meaningful steps to curb the continued assault on our water resources. Meaningful progress requires political will, and one of the many goals of this organization, and others, is to remind our officials that we need action rather than platitudes, lip service, and window dressing.

Successful examples exist to remind us all that such pollution doesn't have to be permanent. While traveling across the country last summer we saw Ohio's infamous Cuyahoga River, which had been so polluted it repeatedly caught on fire! A concerted effort transformed this river from a dump site to a waterway

which now supports fishing and kayaking.

The Potomac River is now much cleaner than it was decades ago. Shad, striped bass and white perch have made a tremendous comeback as pollution from rural areas has been diminished due to long term improvements in agricultural land practices.

For many years, thousands of gallons of untreated, raw sewage were dumped into the Lake Worth Lagoon in Palm Beach County. Citizens belatedly realized that this once pristine estuarine ecosystem had become a massive cesspool. In the 1940s, 500,000 cubic yards of sediment were dredged from the lagoon and placed onto the Town of Palm Beach beaches. The resulting decomposition was so toxic that some claimed fumes from organic material decay even caused the paint to peel off a few downwind residences. Subsequently, direct discharge of sewage into the Lagoon was prohibited. As a result, water quality improved, although to this day it continues to suffer from toxic run off from urban and agricultural sources.

Meaningful progress can be achieved by curtailing agricultural runoff, by upgrading our outdated sewage treatment plants, by fixing hundreds of thousands of leaking septic tanks, and by building new storm water treatment centers. A large task, yes. But it can be done.

Cover Art Florida's Wild Beauty © 2022 Peter R. Gerbert, Acrylics

Painted with striking feather detail and dramatic contrast against the blue water, the Osprey is the main focal point. Find ten creatures within this beautifully diverse Florida marsh! Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), Belted kingfisher (*Megasceryle alcyon*), Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), Green-backed heron (*Butorides virescens*), Gulf fritillary butterfly (*Agraulis vanillae*), Cloudless sulphur butterfly (*Phoebis sennae*) and many native plants. This signed painting, available as a Fine Art Canvas Print, is limited to 100. Your print will come with a Certificate of Endorsement by the Florida Wildlife Federation. A portion of proceeds from the sale of this Limited Edition Print will directly benefit conservation efforts in Florida. Order your print today www.PeterRGerbert.com/FLwildbeauty.htm



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Artist: Peter R. Gerbert Title: Florida's Wild Beauty
Florida's Wild Beauty © 2022 Peter R. Gerbert, Acrylics

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A Solar-Powered Future

This past Legislative Session, our elected representatives passed a bill that would have greatly hindered the use of solar power by individual Floridians. This bill, House Bill 741, known as the net-metering bill, would have allowed utility companies to limit the amount of excess power homeowners could sell that was produced by their own solar panels.



Preston Robertson

Florida Wildlife Federation, and many residents and businesses, strongly requested Governor DeSantis' veto this job killing measure as harming existing solar installation companies, increasing expense for homeowners and rolling back progress on addressing climate change. Thankfully, the Governor did veto the bill, thereby ensuring that the growth of home-grown solar can continue, at least for now.

At present, only about 90,000 homes in our state enjoy rooftop solar out of approximately 8.5 million electric customers. It was claimed by bill proponents that this 1% of solar users were somehow financially impacting the other 99%, even as many studies found that any additional costs to non-solar users was negligible.

While we are pleased businesses that provide solar can continue to do so, and thereby these jobs are saved, it is also important to realize that Florida sits at the epicenter of the harm that climate change is causing, and that increased solar usage is key to addressing this issue. As a low-lying state with many miles of beach, we must do all we can to diminish our reliance upon energy sources that emit greenhouse gases for these gases are warming the planet and raising our coastal waters. Our tourism-dependent economy needs these world renown beaches which are now subject to encroaching seas.

The use of renewable energy in the nation has grown over the years. In 1992, the United States produced 43.5 megawatts of power via the sun. By 2021, that had grown to 119,774 megawatts, with the majority of the growth coming in the last few years. A megawatt equals one million watts, and per the Solar Energy Industries Association, one megawatt can power approximately 164 homes. Interestingly, in the South, we use a lot more electrical energy than elsewhere as we run our air conditioners more.

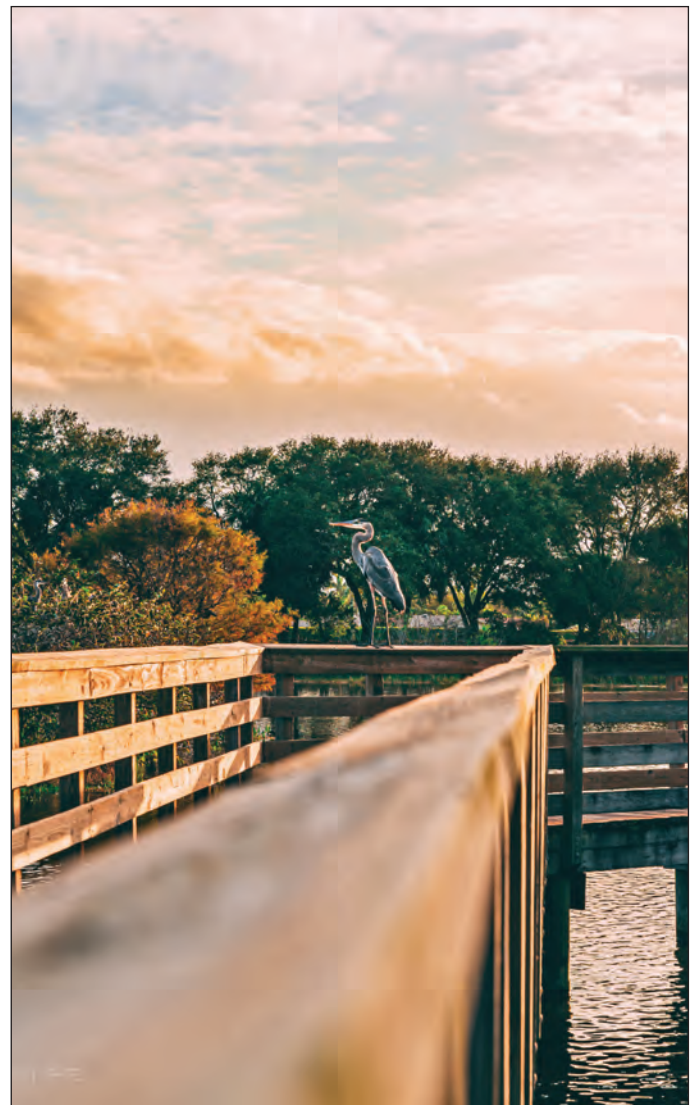
In 2020, 12.6% of American electric power came from renewables. That compares with 37.5% in the European Union (EU), so we have a way to go. The ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which supplies a

significant amount of carbon-based energy to the EU, will push the use of renewables even more as EU nations cut off Russia from the supply chain.

The US wind energy sector is actually growing faster than solar, with close to 122,000 megawatts on-line at present. Ironically, Texas, known for its gas and oil, produces more wind energy than any other state.

We are most gratified that the Governor has vetoed HB 741, and hope that this will inspire even more homeowners to put solar on their roof tops and thereby save money and help save the planet.

We live in the Sunshine State – let's let solar, a never ending source of power, work for us.



Photographer: Spencer Fahey; Title: Wakodahatchee Wetlands; Location: Delray Beach, Florida; Species: Great Blue Heron



Dear Federation Members & Supporters

The 2022 Florida Legislature is now over, and we thank all who voiced their concerns to our elected representatives. It is truly critical to let them know what constituents think. This year, we were successful in helping to defeat most of the harmful parts of Senate Bill 2508, which would have hamstrung Everglades water distribution and thereby restoration. We also were able to kill the poorly thought out seagrass bill (Senate Bill 198). Sea grass is essential to marine life and we need clean waters to ensure it thrives along our coasts. As to solar power, we asked the Governor to veto House Bill 741, which would inhibit individual home solar users. We are glad to report that bill was vetoed.

As to funding for the environment the Legislature approved \$100 million for the Florida Forever program, and \$23 million to purchase Rattlesnake Island in Manatee County. Interestingly, \$300 million is to be put towards the Rural and Family Lands program within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This latter initiative has purchased perpetual easements on working ranches and timber tracts, both of which benefit wildlife habitats and clean our water.

While we face many environmental challenges, there is some good news to report. The Governor and Cabinet recently approved the protection of approximately 17,000 acres of sensitive lands across the state. Included in these actions were

perpetual conservation easements on the 4,100-acre historic Norias Plantation near Tallahassee and 6,800 acres in Glades County's Fisheating Creek Ecosystem project to protect freshwater inflow from the west to Lake Okeechobee. Additionally, over 3,600 acres were added to public ownership in the Panhandle's Santa Rosa County to connect existing conservation tracts and aid the Navy's military mission.



Photographer: Colin Ward; Species: Great Horned Owls; Location: St. Petersburg, Florida

Although small in size, a 2.5-acre parcel in Monroe County's Florida Keys was also purchased to conserve what is left of our rare hardwood hammocks.

At present, approximately 28% of the state is protected in some fashion, be it by military bases such as Avon Park or Eglin Air Force Base, or parks and wildlife management areas. As important are private lands protected by conservation easements. The existence of these special places is why we still have the rare Florida panther and the black bear on our

landscape. While we should be proud of the foresight in saving these lands, more needs to be done as the state continues to grow dramatically in population. That is why FWF continues to push for land conservation.

Our efforts on behalf of re-establishing the native longleaf pine ecosystem in areas devastated by Hurricane Michael are ongoing, as is our work with ensuring proper management for a new marine area on the Gulf Coast. This preserve, known as the Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve, off of Citrus, Hernando and Pasco Counties, contains 400,000 acres of seagrass beds. Moreover, we are involved with the South Atlantic Saltmarsh Initiative, an effort to protect the Atlantic's one million acres of saltmarsh, which reach from Northeast Florida to North Carolina; sea level rise is even now eliminating this important ecosystem.

On the federal front, we are hopeful that the Restoring America's Wildlife Act will soon pass Congress and provide funding for non-game species conservation. Many species across the nation are dwindling in population, and we seek to keep common species common.

Lastly, special thanks to Collier County's Palmetto Ridge High School, and all the wonderful artists, for partnering with FWF to sell hand-crafted black bear creations as an organizational fundraiser.





Photographer: Robin Ulery; Title: Lean on Me; Location: Winter Garden, Florida; Species: Sandhill Crane and Chick



Photographer: Barbara Ford; Title: Migration; Location: Crawfordville, Florida; Species: Monarch Butterfly



Our Outstanding Florida Springs Need Better Protection

In 2016, the Florida's Legislature passed the *Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act*. The Act aimed to protect Florida springs fed by the Floridan Aquifer, one of the state's two aquifer systems. The other is the Biscayne Aquifer, located in an area stretching from Boca Raton to the Florida Keys. The Floridan aquifer is one of the world's most productive.

Under this Act, the state recognized the urgent need to focus on the *water quantity* and *water quality* of Florida's springs and springsheds, a primary source of drinking water for millions of Floridians. Discussions made it clear that the Legislature was responding to the ongoing threats of polluted runoff and discharges resulting from inadequate wastewater and stormwater management practices. Moreover, harmful withdrawals from the Floridan aquifer were noted.

The Legislature identified 30 of our treasured springs as Outstanding Florida Springs (OFS). These 30 OFS (indicated on the map) required additional protections to ensure their conservation and restoration for future generations.

As directed by the Act, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) determined that 24 of the 30 (80%) Outstanding Florida Springs are currently impaired by excessive nitrate pollution. FDEP also estimated that nitrate load discharging from these 24 impaired Outstanding Florida Springs needs to be reduced by 68% to meet water quality targets. This impairment to our springs has occurred under the current set of rules.

The most compelling declaration from the Legislature was the recognition that the rules in effect in 2016 were inadequate to restore our springs and that new rules were warranted.

Springs advocates celebrated the Act in part due to the expectation that the FDEP would develop a robust set of rules with meaningful teeth.

Six years later, FDEP has finally proposed a set of draft rules. Unfortunately, during a March 21, 2022 workshop, the state proposed a set of draft rules that practically mirror the same rules adopted in 2014 for all consumptive use permitting across the St. Johns River Water Management District, Suwannee River Water Management District, Northwest Florida Water Management District and Southwest Florida Water Management District. Simply put, adopting weak language from 2014 does not address the urgent need to create a new set of rules specifically to prevent harmful withdrawals from these 30 OFS. Interestingly, to date 99% of all consumptive use permits, which allow withdrawals from the public's aquifers, have been approved by state agencies. This shocking statistic underscores the findings from the 2016 Legislature – new rules are



Map of Outstanding Florida Springs

warranted.

FDEP has opened the draft rule to public comment. Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF), along with its many partners, drove nearly 800 comments to FDEP calling the proposed rules inadequate and supporting the Florida Springs Council's draft rule as a starting point. It has taken six years for FDEP to get to this point and real action cannot wait any longer. FWF will work with our partners to ensure meaningful rules are proposed and adopted and need every one of you to speak up and support our springs.

In addition to meaningful rules, we also support the use of land protection to help restore our springs by reducing nutrients, increasing springs flow and ensuring connectivity between protected areas. An excellent program led by the Alachua Conservation Trust highlights the urgency to protect the [Ichetucknee Springshed and Trace](#) and [Santa Fe River Basin](#).



Photographer: Valerie Preziosi; Title: Reflecting on Life; Location: Monroe County, Florida; Species: Key Deer



Featured Animal

Florida Native – Fulvous Whistling-Duck

The oddly-named fulvous whistling duck, *Dendrocygna bicolor*, is a distinctive, brightly colored waterfowl. With a mixed coloration of rich caramel-brown and black, this long-legged and long-necked creature lives year-round in peninsular Florida, and groups of up to 100 individuals can be seen congregating around marshy feeding areas. Often roosting in trees, they were once known as “tree ducks.” Its name comes from its predominant color – fulvous or reddish-yellow and whistling from the noise it makes in flight. These ducks eat invertebrates and the seeds of aquatic plants. If we keep our wetlands healthy, we get to keep this beautiful bird on the landscape.





Local High School Raises Funds for the Florida Wildlife Federation's Southwest Office

Palmetto Ridge High School (PRHS) hosted a 4-week long silent art auction to raise money for the Florida Wildlife Federation's (FWF) conservation initiatives in Southwestern Florida. The silent art auction was called Bears Across Collier and featured wooden bear statues built by the PRHS Construction Academy. Once constructed, 22 Southwest Florida artists designed and decorated each of the bears. All of the completed bears were then displayed at the Norris Center, a facility in downtown Naples. Both FWF and PRHS invited the community to visit the art gallery from March 21st to April 16th and place bids for a chance to take home a one-of-a-kind piece of artwork while also supporting local conservation.

The auction concluded with its Celebration of the Artists event on Saturday, April 16, at Cambier Park. Contributing artists exhibited their art, and PRHS students provided music and entertainment. Also, the PRHS culinary program provided light refreshments. The auction closed at the event and winning bidders were able to take home their bears.

Bears Across Collier joined arts and education together to elevate the need for conservation and FWF was honored to be chosen as the beneficiary of this initiative. All the funds raised will be used to carry out our mission in Southwest Florida. This includes local advocacy for bear habitat protection as well as ensuring sound management to avoid human-bear conflict. The funds will also help to support the Southwest office's Share the Landscape program, an



Regional Policy Director Meredith Budd (left) at Bears Across Collier.

educational initiative on coexistence for homeowners. This effort is critically needed as Southwest Florida contains vast conservation lands with abundant wildlife. Bears Across Collier received additional support from the Collier County Public School District, Champions for Learning, Immokalee Technical College, Lowe's Home Improvement, the City of Naples, Naples Artcrafters and PBS contractors. FWF also recognizes and expresses thanks to each of the contributing artists: Yoselin Alonso, Mila Apperlo, Loretta Chickering, Tammy Decaro, Gabi Ferrara, Katie Fritz, Alyssa Gordon, Kaitlyn Handley, Leigh Herndon, Sophia Jensen, Gabi Lenhard, Sandee Mahler, Silvina Marzari, Betty Newman, Aome Rogers, Marvin Rouse, Lynn Sundall, Katie Swartz, Oona Watkins, Donna Wexler, Patti Wisniewski and Amanda Zirzow.

FWF Short Film, *Wildlife in Our Backyard*, Recognized in Multiple Film Festivals

It is often said that people must learn to tolerate wildlife, but what happens if people learn to thrive with them instead? What would that mean for the people of Florida? What would that mean for our native wildlife? These questions are particularly important in understanding the endangered Florida panther. Human development encroaches on panther habitat and with each new development comes new roads, which are deadly to panthers.

The Florida Wildlife Federation highlights why it is so important to share the landscape with wildlife in the award-winning film entitled "Wildlife in Our Backyard." This is FWF's first educational film and it was created in partnership with the fStop Foundation as part of the Share the Landscape program. Share the Landscape is a wildlife coexistence initiative to educate Floridians about the importance of protecting wildlife and their habitat as well as educating people on how best to limit human-wildlife conflict. "Wildlife in Our Backyard" premiered on Save the Florida Panther Day this year (March 19th) and is available to view on FWF's [website](#) and [YouTube](#) Channel. The film has been selected by 14 film festivals and has won awards including Best Sustainable Cities Film, Honorable Mention at the American Golden Picture International Film Festival, and Exceptional Merit at the Nature Without Borders International Film Festival. Take a look!



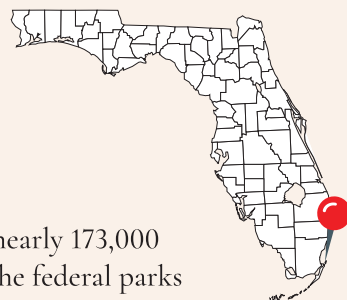
Photographer: Lauren Johnson; Title: Taking It In Stride; Location: Lakeland, Florida; Species: Alligator



Featured Natural Area

Key Biscayne National Park

Unlike many parks, Key Biscayne National Park is 95% water. Encompassing nearly 173,000 acres, the Park, off the coast from Miami, is the largest marine sanctuary of all the federal parks and is home to many wonderful native species, including manatees, sea turtles and coral reefs. It is also a great place to see the American crocodile. A cousin to the much more common American alligator, male crocodiles can grow up to 20 feet in length. This species, which feeds on a wide variety of animal life, can live over 50 years in the wild and is distinguished from the 'gator by its narrow snout and exposed teeth. Many visitors tour the Park in a boat or snorkel, SCUBA or paddleboard. Guided tours include a half-day cruise to Boca Chita Key. Fishing is also a popular activity. 9700SW 328th St., Homestead, FL 33033; 305 230-1144.



Photographer: Mark Dennis; Animal: Green Sea Turtle



Live Oak, A Florida Native Tree

The live oak is undoubtedly one of Florida's most admired trees. When mature, its massive size and spread are awe inspiring.

Quercus virginiana is the scientific name of our live oak. We also have a smaller relative here called sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*). This latter tree generally looks like *Quercus virginiana*, except it has a smaller size at maturity and is found on dry sandy ridges.

Both trees grow over most of Florida. Other widespread species include cabbage palm as well as red maple and bald cypress.

Besides being big and beautiful trees, live oak has some interesting history behind it. During the wooden ship building days, it was selected as the tree to make the ribs of the famous U.S. navy ship U.S.S. Constitution. The boat builders managed to create the ribs with a thickness of 8-18 inches. Plates of



Photographer: Matthew Woodall; Location: Payne's Prairie Preserve State Park, Micanopy, Florida; Subject: Live oak

white oak, a tree with a density is one-third less dense than live oak, were attached to the live oak ribs. These plates were 4.5–7 inches thick. Some of the live oak ribs are still intact on “Old Ironsides.” Indeed, it is the world's oldest ship of any type still afloat.

Besides being good wood for an old war ship, live oak has evolved to deal with Florida's coastal environment. The tree's strong wood and low spreading profile help it be one of Florida's most wind-

sturdy trees. Its thick leaves are able to tolerate salt spray and it can exist in high alkaline soils in coastal areas.

The live oaks low spreading branches make good homes for bromeliads, resurrection fern and Spanish moss, which is used by many birds as nesting material. Live oak acorns are eaten by many species, including sapsuckers, mallard ducks, turkeys, squirrels, black

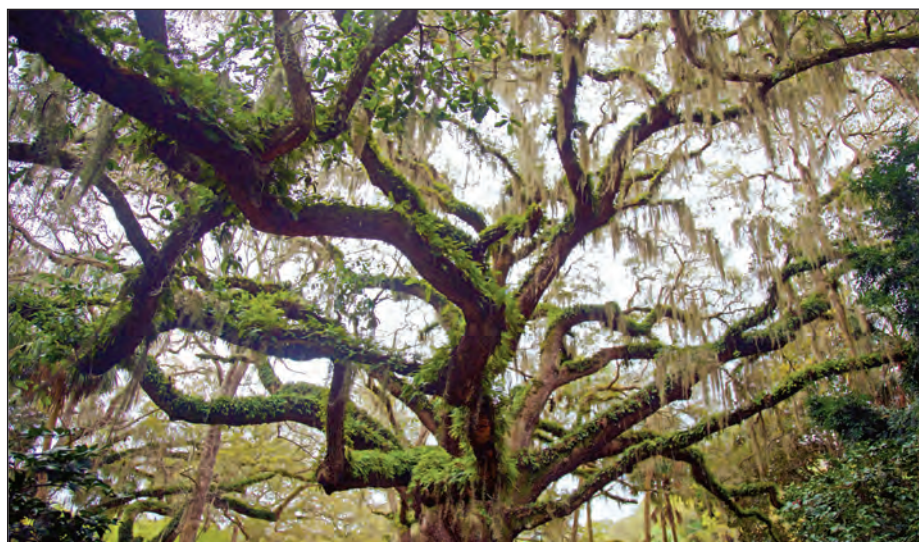


Live oak festooned with Spanish moss.
Photo by Phil Gornicki

bears and deer. Moreover, the threatened Florida scrub jay relies on the sand live oak for nesting.

The Florida Forest Service has a Champion Tree program and two live oaks located in Alachua County are tied for first place. One is 91 feet tall and has a maximum and minimum crown spread of 171 and 158 feet, respectively. The other tree has a whopping trunk diameter of almost eleven feet!

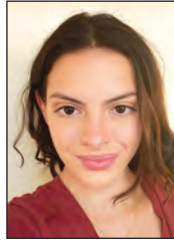
Stan Rosenthal is Forest Advocate with the Florida Wildlife Federation and Extension Agent Emeritus with UF/IFAS Extension.



Photographer: Ward Parker; Location: Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, Palm Coast, Florida; Subject: Live oak

Clean Energy and Climate Action

Conserving natural, non-renewable resources is important because once those resources are gone, they cannot be brought back. Additionally, conserving these resources helps our planet. Certain non-renewable resources such as oil, coal, and natural gas are burned for their energy. When these fossil fuels are burned, they emit large quantities of carbon dioxide, and these carbon emissions contribute to global warming by trapping heat in the atmosphere. Utilizing renewable resources for energy instead of fossil fuels is a great way to reduce carbon emissions. One renewable resource is solar energy.



Alison Ramos

Solar energy is one of the cleanest sources of energy and its use does not create any pollutants while producing electricity. Meanwhile, fossil fuels emit 21.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually when they are burned for energy. Solar energy can be used for heating homes, heating water, cooking and lighting. Switching to solar energy reduces the cost of electricity bills, and with net-metering, the switch can be profitable. Net-metering allows solar energy users to connect their solar panels to electric grids and sell the electricity they do not use in their home back to utility companies. However, in Florida, net-metering may be hindered due to the politicization of conserving our planet, even though the vast majority of Floridians support net-metering.

Saving our planet is not a political issue. Climate change affects everyone, and action must be taken in order to slow climate change. Using solar energy is one of the many ways to do just that.

La conservación de los recursos naturales no renovables es importante porque una vez que esos recursos se acaban, no se pueden recuperar. Además, conservar estos recursos ayuda a nuestro planeta. Ciertos recursos no renovables como el petróleo, el carbón y el gas natural se queman para obtener su energía. Cuando se queman estos combustibles fósiles, emiten grandes cantidades de dióxido de carbono, y estas emisiones de carbono contribuyen al calentamiento global al atrapar el calor en la atmósfera. Utilizar recursos renovables para la energía en lugar de combustibles fósiles es una

excelente manera de reducir las emisiones de carbono. Un recurso renovable es la energía solar.

La energía solar es una de las fuentes de energía más limpias y su uso no crea ningún contaminante mientras produce electricidad. Mientras tanto, los combustibles fósiles emiten 21.300 millones de toneladas de dióxido de carbono al año cuando se queman para obtener energía. La energía solar se puede utilizar para calentar casas, calentar agua, cocinar e iluminar. Cambiar a energía solar reduce el costo de las facturas de electricidad y, con la medición neta, el cambio ahorra dinero. La medición neta permite a los usuarios de energía solar conectar sus paneles solares a las redes eléctricas y vender la electricidad que no usan en su hogar a compañías de electricidad. Sin embargo, en Florida, la medición neta puede detenerse debido a la politización de la conservación de nuestro planeta, aunque la gran mayoría de los floridianos apoyan la medición neta.

Salvar nuestro planeta no es una cuestión política. El cambio climático afecta a todos, y se deben tomar medidas para frenar el cambio climático. El uso de energía solar es una de las muchas maneras de hacer precisamente eso. 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: Robyn Cowlan; Title: The Honey Bee and the Water Lilly; Location: Ormond Beach, Florida; Species: Honey Bee/Water Lilly



Precious Water

Our backyard birdbath is full of activity. Resident yard birds compete for space – blue jays, cardinals, chickadees, titmice, thrashers, even catbirds take turns throughout the day. Occasionally an unusual migrant, like a yellow-throated warbler, stops for a drink. Other wildlife also take advantage of the water source. Bees perch on a rock in the shallow area to quench their thirst, squirrels sit in the middle and an occasional racoon stops by at night, leaving tell-tale paw prints.

With all the splashing throughout the day, keeping the bath clean and full of water takes a little effort. But much more than snacks from bird feeders, clean water is vital to birds and other wildlife, especially in dry weather.

A garden can be a microcosm of the larger landscape. In Florida's freshwater landscape of lakes, rivers and springs, clean and plentiful water is essential – and has become severely threatened.

One of the major threats to our waterways is pollution from excess nitrogen causing algal blooms. Algae in waterways are natural but can be over-fed by nitrogen and other nutrients from farms, yards, leaky pipes and septic tanks. Recent blue-green algal blooms in Florida waters have been devastating to wildlife and local economies.

As individuals, we can make smart, small changes at home to keep from becoming part of this pollution problem. Our lawns might not need fertilizer at all or could benefit by summer blend products that have nutrients to feed grass but contain no nitrogen or phosphorus. If turf grass looks unhealthy, there could be



Photographer: Harry Hooper; Species: Brown Thrasher

another problem that an IFAS county extension agent can help diagnose.

There are important guidelines for any use of fertilizer to keep nitrogen out of local waters. Products should be specialized for turf grass, with no nitrogen or a high percentage of slow-release nitrogen and no phosphorus. If fertilizer is used it should be applied only in the growing season and when there's no chance of heavy rain.

A great alternative to fertilizing grass is replacing all or part of the lawn, using native plants wherever possible. Native plants need less water and maintenance, reduce or eliminate the need for fertilizer and

landscaping with native plants creates important habitat for native wildlife.

Many cities and counties have local ordinances with detailed restrictions and requirements for proper fertilizer use. UF/IFAS Extension has a convenient reference to the state's local fertilizer ordinances:

<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/apps/fertilizer-ordinances/>.

Growing up in Florida, for so many of us, meant enjoying beautiful waterways. As we face greater challenges with a changing climate and growing population it's important to keep informed about issues impacting water quality and let our elected officials know how strongly we support conservation.

FWF will continue to help keep members and supporters informed about water quality and other issues affecting wildlife and all of us. Action alerts offer information about issues and convenient ways to contact local and state decision-makers. Please visit our website to subscribe to our newsletter and become a member.



Photographer: Shari Linger; Location: Palm Harbor, Florida; Description: John Chestnut Senior Park Ponds



FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S *Wild Florida Sweepstakes*

Play the Wild Florida Sweepstakes Today!

When you play the Wild Florida Sweepstakes, presented by the Florida Wildlife Federation, you're supporting vital programs such as land conservation and habitat and wildlife protection right here in Florida.

Play today for your chance to win \$20,000 or five second place prizes valued at \$50 each!

<https://floridawildlifeederation.org/play-the-sweepstakes/>



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FLORIDA WILDLIFE *Kids' Quiz*

by Marney Richards

1. This abundant shark is often seen lying motionless on the bottom of the sea.



2. Do you know a brilliantly colored duck that nests in tree cavities near water?



3. What is a low-growing evergreen palm, with shiny leaves that is native to Florida?



See page 14 for answers and more information.

Rick Abbott

Where There's a Will, There's a Way . . . for Wildlife

Let me introduce myself. My name is Rick Abbott. I am a fisherman, explorer, kayaker, financial advisor, former FWF board member, boater, but most importantly, *Rick Abbott* I am a husband and a father. In these difficult and changing times it is very challenging to raise a family with proper values. This task is made easier by enjoying Florida's outdoors together as a family. Whether it is boating and exploring the Chattahoochee River, fishing off the beach at St. George Island State Park or spending a cold December morning in a deer stand, these are activities that are crucial to teaching my children about life.

Preserving Florida's natural habitats is crucial for current and future generations. I know that while I am working my 8-5 job, FWF is constantly pursuing ways to keep the environment healthy and natural for all of Florida's citizens.

I have included FWF in my will. I want to make sure that my children



and their children can enjoy the same Florida that their parents and grandparents experienced. Please consider FWF in your financial planning.

Please join with Rick and help make sure we and future residents can enjoy a healthy, clean and abundant Florida, which helps not only our environment, but also our economy.

A charitable trust benefiting the Florida Wildlife Federation or a bequest like Rick's is easy to arrange, makes creative use of assets and can benefit your family as well as help the Federation.

For more information on how estate planning can benefit both you and wildlife, please contact Preston Robertson at (850) 656-7113.



Rick Abbott with his family

Answers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

1. The nurse shark is found in nearshore waters of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. They are brownish on top, lighter underneath with blunt mouths and very small eyes. They grow to about 6 feet, up to a maximum of 9 feet, and live approximately 25 years. Nurse sharks feed on lobsters, crabs, squid, octopus, sea urchins and some fish species. These sharks are sluggish and rarely bother humans.

2. Wood ducks have shimmering plumage (feathers) of green, purple and blue, with white stripes and patches. Spending most of their time in wooded wetlands, these "dabbling" ducks tip forward until their tails stick straight up when they feed in shallow water. Wood ducks will also nest in artificial cavities or wooden nesting boxes.

3. The needle palm has a natural range in our state from the Panhandle to Central Florida, mostly growing in moist to wet sites. These palms are also popular in home landscapes as they are easy to grow in sun or shade, are drought tolerant and pest-free.

How Did You Do, Florida Kid?



Photographer: Kim Nix-Gell; Title: Pollinating Bee; Location: Cocoa, Florida; Species: Honey Bee



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Florida’s wildlife, habitat,
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Photographer: Prashant Kankaria; Location: Tierra Verde, Florida; Animal: Snowy Plover