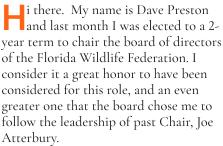


'hair's Message

Dave Preston

Our New Chair!



A brief bit about me: I grew up in North Miami in the 80s and 90s, fishing and exploring the inshore and offshore waters of South Florida, the Bahamas, and the Keys, determined to map every bend of every creek in the Everglades and Florida Bay to memory. I spent my college years in Gainesville and traveled around North Florida and the Nature Coast learning the inshore waters from Homosassa and Yankeetown north to Crystal River and Steinhatchee, usually in a rented canoe or kayak. After graduating I moved back to South Florida in 2003 and currently live in Jupiter. I have a passion for inshore fly fishing, and still spend as much time as I can in the Keys and Everglades on my skiff hunting tarpon, snook, redfish, bonefish, or whatever else I can convince to consider swiping at a (hopefully) well-placed fly.

I first joined the FWF board in 2017 because as many of us who grew up here in Florida have seen, there is a need for those of us who prioritize preserving what's left of our wild lands, waters, and wildlife to get involved. I have spent the last few years working closely with our board and staff to improve our website, communications, and technology systems, which has resulted in a more scalable platform that will allow us to



grow and expand our reach and influence, with our ultimate goal of continuing our legacy of being an organization that substantially moves the needle on our most critical environmental issues.

It is an unquestionable fact that there are powerful forces in this state that, if left to their own devices, will see to it that there is nothing recognizable left of this place that we call home. I agreed to take on this role because I feel that a fresh approach is needed, not just by us, but by the entire environmental community. We are currently living in a state that is essentially run by special interests - whether it is developers, corporate polluters, or energy monopolies. It seems that every day there is a grave new threat to what is left of this state's natural splendor. The best counter we have for their onslaught of dirty money is our voices, but the good news is that when we strategically organize and make our voices heard, our decision makers listen. And, together, we can create a better future for this state and future generations.

The battle for the soul of Florida is far from over, and we hope you will join us. Whether it's through the legal system, policy creation, grass-roots activism or education, I can promise you that we will be an organization with teeth that does not shy away from a fight, an organization that represents you, its members and supporters, and an organization that we are proud to be part of.

Cover Photo

Photographer: Mike Johnson

Animal: Bald Eagle Location: Port Leon





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Artist: Mike Johnson Animal: Bald Eagle

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Tribute to Our Lost Friend

n late September, our compadre and ally, National Wildlife Federation's Jessica Bibza, was killed in an accident in St. Peterburg. She was riding her bike in training for an Ironman Competition and was struck by a car. Jessica was a true conservationist and partner in the effort to keep Florida sustainable and replete with native wildlife and wild places. We miss you, friend.



Jessica Bibza



Photographer: Barbara Ford; Animal: Belted Kingfisher; Location: Crawfordville

President's Message

Preston Robertson, President and CEO

Keeping Florida Special

Our thoughts are with the Floridians who have endured the wrath of Hurricane Ian, especially in Southwest and Central Florida. The destruction of so many residences and most importantly lives and families, is a cause of grief for us all.

Welcome to our new Board Chair, Dave Preston, who has kindly taken on this responsibility. Many thanks to outgoing Chair Joe Atterbury. Joe was a stalwart leader for our organization and a true friend. Also, welcome to our new employee in Southeast Florida, Tasman Rosenfeld! It is by the generosity of our members and supporters that we are able to expand our reach to help our state's wildlife and Nature.

The 2023 Legislative Session is called to order next March, but committee meetings will start sooner than that. At present, our goals will be to increase funding for the Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands programs, revitalize the Ocklawaha River by freeing it from the misguided dam and possibly increase penalties for those who violate our fish and wildlife laws. At present, penalties are far short of those in other states.

We still are hopeful that the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, will soon come up for a vote and be



Photographer: Luis Forte; Title: Night Dancer; Location: Homestead

passed by the U.S. Senate. This bipartisan legislation, which FWF and many disparate groups across the political spectrum have supported for years, would fund the recovery of a broad suite of birds and animals across the nation.

The Inflation Reduction Act passed by Congress will provide significant funding for clean energy, including in agriculture. It is hoped this effort will mitigate against our rising temperatures and



thereby storms, hurricanes and sea level rise.

We have opposed the siting of commercial fish farming in the Gulf of Mexico, as it has been noted that this activity is harmful to native stocks. We need to restore our estuaries to replenish our once abundant fisheries. FWF successfully opposed the use of trawling on the Oculina Bank in the Atlantic to save our precious coral reefs and continues to promote the planting of longleaf pine to restore native habitats benefitting landowners and native plants and animals.

Our endeavor to save the Florida panther and other at-risk species continues even in the face of development pressures and we are expanding environmental education programs to reach more Floridians.

Thanks to all who support our mission to keep Florida special.

Please go to <u>www.floridawildlifefederation.org</u> to see how you can help and have a pleasant fall season.

Action item: Please call our U.S. Senators and ask them to support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Sen. Marco Rubio – (202) 224-3041; Sen. Rick Scott – (202) 224-5274. Thanks!





Florida Wildlife Federation Board of Directors at September Board Meeting.



Florida Native - Opossum

our only marsupial, the opossum, or 'possum, was first recorded in North America by Europeans in 1607. Designated as *Didelphis virginiana*, the opossum is truly a living fossil, as its ancestors date back 20 million years! As a marsupial, these mammals bear live young which feed in a pouch on the mother's belly. With a hairy body and sharp snout, these creatures have long rat-like tails that are prehensile, meaning they can use their tails like a hand. With litters of up to 20 babies, the unaggressive opossum will even involuntarily play dead in order not to have to deal with danger. Although they have many babies, they are also very short lived - most die within two years. Generally nocturnal, opossums are famous for their



omnivorous diet. They eat carrion, fruit, grains, frogs, insects, and even skeletons (for the calcium). They even eat Irish Spring soap! Having this ancient species around is a good idea – they also consume up to 5,000 ticks per year.

Northeast Florida Report

Sarah Gledhill, Vice President

Restoration Can't Wait: Reuniting the Great Florida Riverway

or more than 14,000 years, Florida natives and newcomers set out on the St. Johns, Silver and Ocklawaha Rivers in search of a connection with nature, healing springs, and adventure. This vast network of waterways and springs linked the state's wild ecosystem to its growing river communities.

The Great Florida Riverway, a 217-mile aquatic wonderland, was a refuge for Native Americans, Florida's first tourist attraction, a magnet for travel writers and explorers, and a transportation corridor for people and products.

Just over 50 years ago, all of that changed. The construction of the Rodman Dam, part of the failed Cross Florida Barge Canal, severed the Ocklawaha River, damaging the ecology of the magnificent Ocklawaha River, cherished Silver Springs, and the highly productive St. Johns River estuary.

Like the Everglades to the south, restoring the Great Florida Riverway is vital to improving the overall ecological and economic



Thanks to Capt. Erika Ritter and Capt. Karen Chadwick, FWF sponsored a trip on the Ocklawaha for young advocates from Grandview Preparatory School.

health of north and central Florida. A necessary component of this restoration is breaching the Rodman dam to restore the natural flow of the impounded Ocklawaha River.

FWF, alongside our coalition partners, continues to build broad support with the local communities and leaders, as well as unite outdoor recreationists from all walks of life in this effort.

Our goal for 2023 is to influence state legislators to support a comprehensive package that promotes economic prosperity, outdoor recreation, and the protection of our water resources. Leading up to next year's legislative session, we continue to work hard to build that support.



But we need your help.

In February, the Coalition is hosting four Rallies for the Rivers events in Jacksonville, Welaka, Lake Apopka and Ocala. Each event will take on its own identity while sharing the common goal of spreading public awareness and support for reuniting the Great Florida Riverway by way of breaching the dam. To find out more about the events, visit https://floridawildlife

federation.org/rallies-for-the-river/.

During the Rallies for the Rivers events, we will be signing people up to join our Legislative Advocacy Team. This is a statewide effort and we need Floridians from all corners of the state to help. Sign up to be a part of the team and attend local delegation meetings and engage with your elected officials pre-Session. You will be given all the tools to make your advocacy effective and fun. If you can't attend an event, don't worry you can sign up for the Legislative Advocacy Team by visiting https://action.floridawildlifefederation .org/a/advocacy-team



Photographer: Raymond Fripp; Title: Needing A Pedicure; Location: Tampa



Allan Broussard / Catfish Creek State Park

The Allan David Broussard/Catfish Creek State Park is 8,000 acres of scrub, sandhills and flatwoods. These lands represent a part of what little remains of the historic Lake Wales Ridge.

The existing Ridge was above water when the seas were much higher millennia ago. Situated in Polk County between Lakes Piece and Hatchineha, the park offers excellent recreational activities, including six miles of hiking trails and seven miles of equestrian paths, as well as fishing, wildlife viewing and camping. Rare plants may be seen here, including cut-throat grass, scrub plum and the pygmy fringe tree. Wildlife includes specialties such as the scrub jay, gopher tortoise, bald eagles and the scrub lizard. Location: 4335 Firetower Rd., Haines City, FL 33844; (863) 696-1112.



Credit: FloridaStateParks.org

Southwest Florida Report

Meredith Budd, Regional Policy Director

Missed Opportunity For The Florida Panther

The major landowners in eastern Collier County have withdrawn their application for a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) is a proponent of landscapescale conservation planning, and this HCP would have provided large-scale protections for the endangered Florida panther and many other species in a region that is currently targeted for development.

While the HCP would have allowed for 45,000 acres of development, all of this development is still on pace to move forward with or without the HCP. With the HCP, however, development would have been clustered into areas of lesser conservation value. Critically, it also would have permanently protected 107,000 acres of land from development and provide valuable habitat and movement corridors for the Florida panther and other native wildlife.

Now that the HCP application has been withdrawn, development is moving forward without assurances for landscape-level protection. This means that we will need to confront every damaging project individually and hope the landowners voluntarily set aside land that would have been required by the HCP. This is a piecemeal approach with a project-by-project review process that does not consider cumulative impacts of the proposed projects and results in fragmentation of habitat.

The HCP would have allowed for a longer-term, more comprehensive approach at the landscape level to enable preservation of large swaths of private lands at no cost to taxpayers. Indeed, the HCP would have ensured that the most important habitats

would have been protected from development projects forever.

With the current HCP application off the table, FWF is relieved that some landowners have expressed their commitment to continuing to work with conservation partners, including FWF, to implement

the conservation provisions of the HCP as they move forward with individual development projects. FWF encourages the USFWS and the landowners to resolve issues that prevented the HCP from being



Florida panther, courtesy of fStop Foundation

adopted and urges the landowners to re-submit an application to ensure protections for imperiled species on Collier County's remaining private lands.



Photographer: Cynthia M. Clark; Title: Serenity; Location: Polk

Southeast Florida Report

Tasman Rosenfeld, Outreach Coordinator

Our New Outreach Coordinator!



reetings members and supporters of FWF. I am honored to introduce myself as the new Outreach Coordinator. While I am fresh in this position, I previously spent over four years on the Board as one of the Youth Conservation Directors and am therefore no newcomer to the Federation and its affairs.

I recently graduated from Yale University where I majored in Earth and Planetary Sciences. During my time there, my research mostly pertained to the evolution, ecology, and conservation of amphibians and reptiles. This work took me to remarkable landscapes across the globe, like the Ecuadorian Andes where I was fortunate enough to discover several new frog species, the mountains of Japan where I worked to protect giant salamanders, and the tide pools of Acadia National Park in Maine to study a salttolerant population of salamanders. After trying to cultivate a global perspective on conservation, I am ecstatic to have returned to my home state of Florida and to get my boots on the ground - or in the swamp - for FWF.

My duties as Outreach Coordinator will consist primarily of engaging high school and college students with conservation! I will accomplish that by leading field trips, visiting schools, and working with the blossoming music

and arts scenes across the state. I'll be placing a particular emphasis on southeast Florida, where I have been heavily active in the education and arts communities since my teenage years.

The approach will be two-pronged: to spark curiosity and to organize youth conservation advocacy. I will build on years of experience as a science teacher by getting young people out into the wild to inspire enthusiasm for our state's dazzling biodiversity and unique ecosystems. Leveraging that youthful drive, we will be organizing grassroots action campaigns to advance policies such as fully funding the Florida Forever program, implementing climate change mitigation and resiliency measures at all levels of government, enhancing landscape connectivity, and providing adequate protections for state and federally listed species. Furthermore, I will be assisting the Federation's own Meredith Budd and Marney Richards with expanding our support for those who wish to provide habitat for and coexist with wildlife in their residences and schools.

I look forward to continuing the fight alongside you all for a better future for all Floridians and our state.



Photographer: Mike Fults; Title: Sunset In The Eastern Skies; Location: Sarasota

State of the Forest

Stan Rosenthal, Forest Advocate

Project Learning Tree

n August I participated in a very worthwhile event.

To start my story, I want to tell you about a program called PLT or Project Learning



Tree. PLT is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators, parents, and community leaders working with youth from preschool through grade 12. PLT's mission is to advance environmental literacy, stewardship, and career pathways using trees and forests as windows on the world. PLT started in the mid-1970s with the forest products industry cooperating with educators and other interested parties to create methods to teach environmental science. After a time, these methods got boiled down into an activity guide, which is chock full of multi-disciplinary, hands-on activities. Cool ones such as being a water molecule and then physically traveling through oceans, glaciers, streams and many other stations, to see how water moves around our planet. Another exercise has students counting the rings on a slice of a tree to determine its age and how it grew, and then comparing that to one's own life and the list goes on.

The PLT coordinator with the University of Florida (UF) was contacted by Rayonier, a multi-national forest industry, to help that company with PLT. Specifically, Rayonier's national headquarters, located just north of Jacksonville, had done a good job of connecting with the local community but wanted to be able to do a better job of educating young people.

Concentration would be on environmental science and establishing a bridge between what they do as a land management company and how we live our lives. Elise Cassie of UF contacted myself and Robin Will (a PTL facilitator) to help put together a one day PLT training at Rayonier's national headquarters. Since we were so close to Georgia, we also were joined by Chelsea York of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

To make a long story short, we spent a fun-filled day showing a dozen Rayonier staff and foresters examples from the book and how to connect our youth with environmental science.

To summarize, it is critical that major commercial timber landowners



Photographer: Stan Rosenthal

emphasize environmental stewardship and educate others about the importance of forests.

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



Photographer: Don Pelliccia; Title: Cypress at Golden Hour; Location: Ocala

Wakulla Springs

Wakulla Springs is the largest and deepest freshwater spring in the world and is fourteen miles south of Tallahassee, Florida. Its water maintains a temperature of 70°F all year, making the spring a great place to swim and relax. Wildlife, such as alligators, deer, turtles, and others can be observed at Wakulla Springs State



Allison Ramos

Park. Visitors can utilize the boat tour to see and learn more about the wildlife, the spring, the river, and the history behind the park. Wakulla Springs is a beautiful sight to see, and it is sad that more is not being done to protect this natural treasure.

Wakulla Springs used to offer tours with glassbottomed boats. Tourists would look through the bottom of the boat and see the spring's aquatic wildlife through the spring's clear water. Glass-bottom boat tours in Wakulla Springs no longer run regularly. This is due to the water becoming polluted and cloudy.

In 1998, the hydrilla plant was discovered in Wakulla Springs. Hydrilla and algae began rapidly growing in the spring, dominating the plants that native species in the spring consumed. Nitrates caused the rapid growth of algae and hydrilla in the water. The nitrates found in the spring originate from human sources such as wastewater, fertilizers and septic tanks. When it rains, nitrates are picked up, soak into the soil, then flow through sinkholes into the aquifer where Wakulla Springs receives its water. While 30% of the spring's nitrogen (an element of nitrate) levels are from natural causes, the rest is produced by humans.

The nitrate levels and the rapid growth of hydrilla and algae in Wakulla Springs changed the ecology of the spring and created a decline in some of the species in the area. It is important that we protect and restore Wakulla Springs. We must advocate for better water, stormwater, and wastewater management. Additionally, we need to take action to help Wakulla Spring and the nature around us, such as planting native plants and not using fertilizer or pesticides.

Wakulla Springs es el manantial de agua dulce más grande y profundo del mundo y se encuentra a catorce millas al sur de Tallahassee, Florida. Su agua mantiene una temperatura de 70°F todo el año, lo que hace del manantial un gran lugar para nadar y relajarse. Se puede observar la vida silvestre natural, como caimanes, venados, tortugas y otros animales salvajes en el Parque Estatal Wakulla Springs. Los visitantes pueden realizar el recorrido en bote para ver y aprender más sobre la vida silvestre, el manantial, el río y la historia detrás del parque estatal. Wakulla Springs es una hermosa vista para ver, y es devastador que no se esté haciendo más para proteger este tesoro natural.

Wakulla Springs solía ofrecer recorridos en bote donde el fondo del bote era de vidrio. Los turistas miraban a través del fondo del bote y verían la vida silvestre del manantial a través del agua clara del manantial. Los recorridos en bote con fondo de vidrio en Wakulla Springs ya no se realizan con regularidad. Esto se debe a que el agua se ha vuelto contaminada y turbia.

En 1998, se descubrió la planta Hydrilla en Wakulla Springs. La planta Hydrilla y las algas comenzaron a crecer rápidamente en la primavera, dominando las plantas que consumía la vida silvestre en la primavera. El nitrato provocó el rápido crecimiento de las algas y la planta Hydrilla en el agua. El nitrato que se encuentra en el manantial proviene de fuentes humanas como aguas residuales, fertilizantes y fosas sépticas. Cuando llueve, el nitrato se acumula con el agua, se empapa en el suelo y luego fluye a través de los sumideros hacia el acuífero donde Wakulla Springs recibe su agua. Si bien el 30 % de los niveles de nitrógeno (un elemento del nitrato) del manantial se deben a causas naturales, el resto lo producen los humanos.

Los niveles de nitrato y el rápido crecimiento de Hydrilla y algas en Wakulla Springs cambiaron la ecología del manantial y crearon una disminución en algunas de las especies de vida silvestre en el área. Es importante que protejamos y restauremos Wakulla Springs. Debemos abogar por una mejor gestión del agua, las aguas pluviales y las aguas residuales. Además, debemos tomar medidas para ayudar a Wakulla Spring y la naturaleza que nos rodea, como sembrar plantas nativas y no usar fertilizantes ni pesticidas

The Everyday Environmentalist

Marney Richards, Education Coordinator

Native Wildflowers

The scenic road from Tallahassee to the coast is abundant with wildflowers this fall. Roadsides are a bright mix of yellow and purple with native sunflowers, goldenrod and blazing star. Throughout Florida, summer and fall are good times for wildflower viewing along roadsides. Native wildflowers provide nectar and pollen sources for many types of insects, and the plants are teeming with these pollinators. Our pollinators need native wildflowers - and we need our native pollinators!

Only a small fraction of land in the United States has been undisturbed by human activity. That's why providing habitat – food, shelter and nesting areas for wildlife – in our urban landscapes is essential. Adding wildflowers and other native plants to our patios, gardens and yards is a way to help support a diversity of beneficial insects and other small wildlife.

Fall is a perfect time to plant wildflowers. Depending on your region, wildflowers can be planted in Florida from mid-September through January. Having a variety of plants, with flowers of different colors, shapes and sizes and different bloom times during the seasons is important to pollinators.

Florida Wildlife Federation would like to say thank you and help you add wildflowers to your home garden when you renew your annual contribution. This fall we're offering a packet with a wildflower mix with the following flowers.



Rudbeckia

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta) is found throughout Florida in sandhills, flatwoods and disturbed areas. A wonderful garden plant, blooming spring to fall, it is an excellent nectar source for a variety of butterflies and bees. Black-eyed Susan is also larval host to some moths and its seeds are eaten by small birds.



Coreopsis

Florida's state wildflower is Coreopsis, also known as tickseed. Lanceleaf tickseed (Coreopsis lanceolata) occurs in sandhills, edges of swamps and marshes and disturbed areas. It is another

garden favorite which typically blooms in spring to mid-summer, attracting butterflies and other pollinators. Its seeds are commonly

eaten by birds and small wildlife.



Dotted horsemint

Dotted horsemint, (Monarda punctata) is a hardy, aromatic wildflower that attracts a great variety of pollinating insects, including bees, wasps and butterflies. It occurs naturally in meadows, coastal dunes, and dry disturbed areas, blooming from early summer through fall. This wildflower is a beautiful garden addition, with showy pink to lavender bracts and small whitish to yellowish flowers with purple spots.

You can plant these wildflower seeds in a weedless sunny spot and keep moist until the seeds germinate. Watch your flowers grow and keep a lookout for pollinators. Thank you from FWF!



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! Go to:

https://floridawildlifefederation.org/play-the-sweepstakes/

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FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids Quiz by Marney Richards

This beetle is named after one of the plants it visits to gather pollen.



2. Do you know a beautiful snake that is sometimes mistaken for the venomous coral snake?



You might recognize the smallest woodpecker in North America at a backyard feeder.



See page 14 for answers and more information.



Thank You to Our Donors

Thank You for Your Generous Support!

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

Join or Renew with FWF Today!

Please go to
floridawildlifefederation.org
or call **850 656-7113** to
JOIN or RENEW Today!
Thanks!

Answers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Kids' Quiz

• Goldenrod soldier beetles are found • throughout Florida feeding on nectar and pollen from many plants, especially goldenrod species. They are not harmful to humans and help in the garden by feeding on insect pests. Scarlet kingsnakes are non-venomous (not poisonous) and have red bands touching black ones: remember the rhyme: "red on black, friend to Jack." Coral snakes have red and yellow bands touching. Scarlet kingsnakes live in pinelands and hardwood hammocks. They burrow and can climb very well.

Downy woodpeckers are found in many habitats in Florida, from forests to backyards, foraging on trees, shrubs and weed stalks. They eat a variety of insects, especially beetles and ants, as well as seeds and berries. You can see them eating suet and nuts at bird feeders.

How Did You Do, Florida Kid?

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

t is by the self-directed efforts of individual Floridians that the goal of conservation is met. Two such individuals who exemplify that dedication are Claude and April Ward.

Married since 1981, Claude and April attended the same high school in New Port Richey. In 11th grade Claude took a job with ABC Appliance as

suggested by his guidance counselor. He was the sole employee, but along with his boss, they grew the business to 22 employees. Claude then opened his own business, called Harbor Appliance. About 22 years ago, Claude's store merged with Famous Tate Appliance and Bedding. He now oversees 11 stores and a distribution center, as well as over 240 employees in the Tampa area.

As ardent lovers of Florida's wildlife and wild places, and to gain more land upon which to ride horses and recreate, the Wards purchased 50 acres in



The Wards

rural Gilchrist County. This property is simply beautiful, with native plant and animal species present in great array. Very graciously, the Wards plan to leave the property to the Federation, which will ensure its perpetual conservation.

Please join with those people like the Wards who have a deep appreciation for the natural world and enjoy our outdoors. Join

those who understand that we must work to keep the attributes that make Florida a special place to live and visit.

You may assist in keeping the wild in Florida by including the Florida Wildlife Federation in your will or in your trust as a beneficiary. This means of support is simple to do and will keep the Federation strong.

For more information about estate planning, please feel free to contact Preston Robertson at (850) 656-7113.

Thanks!



Donations Have Been Received in Memory of:

Honorary Gift:

Drs. Christine and Donald Totten

By Rebecca Leas

"To honor a lifetime of land and water stewardship by the Tottens"

Memorial Gift:

Mary Sue Sutherland

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