

# THE FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

*A Natural History  
Training Program*



## Central East Region Update

### In This Issue:

1. FMNP Teacher Scholarship Awarded
2. New FMNP Webstore Now Open
3. FMNP Instructor is Florida State Park Service Interpreter of the Year
4. Special Topics Courses and New Designations
5. Natural History Network
6. Instructor's Corner: Instructors Offer Students Fun, Field-based Exercise in First-Ever Habitat Evaluation Class
7. Area News & Events: Brevard County FMNP Students, Mink Sightings, Photo Contest
8. Brevard County Freshwater Wetlands Class
9. Volusia County Freshwater Wetlands Class
10. Volusia County Coastal Systems Class
11. Indian River Upland Habitats Class

### 1. Cathleen Tinder Awarded First-Ever FMNP Teacher Scholarship

#### Science Teacher Brings FMNP Knowledge to Junior High School Students

Congratulations to Cathleen Tinder!

Cathleen is the first recipient of the newly established Florida Master Naturalist Program Teacher Scholarship. Cathleen teaches 6th Grade Earth Science and 7th Grade Life Science at Sebastian Charter Junior High School in Indian River County. She has already completed the Freshwater Wetlands course and the Scholarship will allow her to continue her FMNP training. Cathleen states "I have already gained much from taking my first module, including utilizing my class projects in the classroom and taking all of my 6th grade students on an ecology-based field trip to a local conservation area that I experienced first-hand in the FMNP program. I also began an after-school Ecology Club that is involved in mangrove and oyster restoration in the Indian River Lagoon that was directly inspired from taking my first course."

We applaud Cathleen's dedication and commitment to environmental/ecology education in Florida. Her success in putting her knowledge into action should serve as an inspiration to us all. Thank you, and congratulations once again Cathleen!

### 2. FMNP Webstore

We are pleased to announce that the new FMNP Webstore is now open for business! Some of the notable improvements include:

- The ability to complete purchases online—payments can be made by credit card or PayPal.
- An expanded product line—in addition to FMNP logo items, educational reference materials, including field guides, are now being offered. ***Also, you can now purchase the FMNP Core Module video series on DVD singly or as a complete set for a discounted price!***
- Improved customer service—our new vendor is committed to providing prompt and courteous assistance.

We invite you to explore the new FMNP Webstore at: <http://fmnp-store.myshopify.com/>

A special thank you is extended to Sensing Nature, LLC ([www.sensingnature.com](http://www.sensingnature.com)), our new vendor, for developing and managing the Webstore on behalf of the FMNP.

Please forward any comments or suggestions about our new webstore to [info@masternaturalist.org](mailto:info@masternaturalist.org).

### 3. FMNP Instructor is Florida State Park Service Interpreter of the Year

#### Lauren Swanson Recognized for Improving Interpretation Services at Florida State Parks

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Congratulations to FMNP Instructor Lauren Swanson, who was selected as the Florida Park Service (FPS) Interpreter of the Year. The Joe Kenner Award for Interpreter of the Year is presented each year to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to FPS during the previous year. The selected nominee's work must demonstrate continued excellence in the practice of interpretation, including instilling in the general public an understanding of, and appreciation for, FPS resources and the natural and cultural values which they possess.

Lauren has excelled in her position with the FPS. During the past two years alone, she has increased the number of programs offered at North Peninsula State Park in Flagler Beach from five to forty, ten to fifteen of which are given each month. Lauren was also responsible for developing river boat and kayak tours, which have become a huge source of income for the new Friends of Gamble Rogers State Park that she co-founded this year. In addition, she has increased the number of on-site field trips offered for schools, as well as the number of off-site public interpretive programs. Largely as a result of Lauren's hard work and dedication, North Peninsula State Park is now recognized as one of the best in the district for interpretation, which she and other park staff are very proud of. Lauren credits her managers, Barbara Roberts and Mark Giblin, for their enthusiastic support of interpretation at the park.

Lauren has been working with the FPS since February 2010. She has a MS in Natural Resources and Environmental Science and is a Certified Interpretive Guide with the National Association for Interpretation. Lauren also serves as an interpreter for the National Park Service at Ft. Matanzas National Monument in St. Augustine. She has been an instructor with the FMNP since 2011.

### 4. Special Topics Courses and New Designations

#### Florida Master Naturalist Land Steward and Advanced Florida Master Naturalist Designations Now Offered

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The FMNP Special Topics courses are here and may soon be taught at an FMNP training location near you. We have had many inquiries into the Special Topics courses, which are 3-day workshops that cover specific subjects in detail.

The Special Topics courses include:

- Conservation Science (biodiversity, ecosystem integrity, and conservation strategies)
- Wildlife Monitoring (monitoring mammals, birds, and herpetofauna)
- Habitat Evaluation (large-scale assessment, local-scale assessment, and water quality)
- Environmental Interpretation (interpretive presentations, guided programs, and interpretive displays)

There have also been many inquiries regarding certificates and designations for completing Special Topics courses. Persons completing all four Special Topics courses will receive a framed diploma and will be listed on the FMNP web site as a Florida Master Naturalist Land Steward. Persons who complete all four special topics courses and also complete all three FMNP Core Modules will receive a framed diploma and designation on the FMNP website as an Advanced Florida Master Naturalist. That would be a remarkable achievement, good luck!

### 5. Natural History Network

#### New Organization Promotes Value of Natural History Through Activities and Publications

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The Natural History Network is a recently established organization with a mission to promote the value of natural history by discussing and disseminating ideas and techniques on its successful practice to educators, scientists, artists, writers, the media, and the public at large. The publication of the Natural History Network is the on-line Journal of Natural History Education and Experience.

As natural history educators and enthusiasts, many of you may find the activities of this organization and the publications of the journal interesting and valuable. For more information about The Natural History Network or to access published articles and other information, please see the website <http://naturalhistorynetwork.org/>.

## 6. Instructor's Corner

### Instructors Offer Students Fun, Field-based Exercise in First-Ever Habitat Evaluation Class

Instructors Jeanne Murphy and Bryan Lane are celebrating the graduation of their first Habitat Evaluation class. A special thank you to Jeanne and Bryan for offering the narrative of their recent class experience presented below.

Leaning over the boardwalk railing, I see the nested quadrat sampling area that the student group discusses. "Is that plant taking up 33% or 50%?" one student says. Someone else in the group pipes up, "...and how do we account for the cypress knees in our survey?"

Walking the epiphyte-draped boardwalk in north Pinellas County, each of the three Habitat Evaluation groups of 4 to 5 students diligently determines the cover percentage of open water, bare soil, leaf litter, floating aquatics, herbaceous material and woody shrubs for 10 feet on each side of the naturally decorated boardwalk for 50-foot intervals. This was not an easy task since it takes some experience to visualize habitats in this manner.

Easing them into this mindset, they were first directed to conduct random cover percentage samples along the edge of the boardwalk every 15 feet using durable yet inexpensive squares made from PVC pipe. This meant each group would toss the quadrat square directly down from the boardwalk edge three times and look at the percentages they "caught" within their section. (No one threw the quadrat over the railing into the swamp without holding the other end of rope either!) This activity led to the conversation about plant percentages and cypress knees.

Quickly we saw our "clumpers" and "splitters" appear, which is an important aspect of fieldwork. We explained that as a field team it is necessary to determine how much information can be clumped together so that progress is still made while continuing to split out enough detail for recording solid data.

After they were content with their percentages, the groups shared what they determined, challenges they addressed and decisions they made to provide consistency to their data collection. The activity was a great experience for the class, while allowing them to work together evaluating the habitat for potential wildlife uses.

This was our Local Scale modified belt transect field activity with random nested quadrats for evaluating the vegetative cover percentage. A wordy, yet scientifically valid method that meant a fun, field experience for the class. During our various field trips, we used aerial photography (Large Scale), conducted Point Center Quadrat Samples (Local Scale), and visited a couple of Alum treatment sites with a Pinellas County water quality guest speaker (Water Quality). By the end of the class, the students were thrilled with the new information they had learned.

The class was a nice mix of people taking the class to increase their knowledge for being better land stewards, active volunteers, plant nursery staff, waterbody treatment professionals, teachers, environmental educators and land managers.

Congratulations to Lindsay Bell, Tom Bell, Ashley Biernacki, Tiffany Custer, Aurora Hadsock, Henrietta Hight, Syd Lemieux, Alice Morgan, Howard Saytor, James Schwartz and Tracy Telatycki for leaping into the first FMNP Habitat Evaluation class!

As instructors, we enjoyed seeing returning FMNP graduates and meeting others for the first time. Offering the Special Topics is rewarding and encourages us to learn new information and enhance our skills and opportunities as environmental educators.

We can't wait to offer our next Special Topics classes this September (Conservation Science) and December (Environmental Interpretation). Registrations opening soon!



## 7. Area News & Events

### Brevard County FMNP Students Put Their Training to Use to Improve Local Resources

Brevard County FMNP students have been busy contributing to their local communities this year. Students enrolled in the most recent Coastal



Students enrolled in the most recent Coastal Systems course created and installed a kiosk for a nearby spoil island in the Indian River Lagoon, which is undergoing restoration by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) as part of the Spoils Island Project. In addition, the students also supplied and planted native plants in a memorial garden on the island to benefit local wildlife and enhance the beauty of the site. According to student Linda Archer, "We were all very proud of [the project] and expect it to convey to the public the importance of the work being done on the island, with the hope of winning their support to treasure it and others like it."



Students David Sibley and Linda Archer proudly pose with the kiosk they created for their FMNP course final project.

Other FMNP student projects include the creation of educational signs to be installed along trails on Pine Island and within the Sam's House butterfly garden, and the creation of an educational sign and the repair of the structural supports for the kiosk at the Helen & Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary in Rockledge. Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL) land manager Scott Taylor said the students "were an excellent crew" and plans to use the material they developed for the Cruickshank kiosk at several other EEL properties as well.

These are only a few of the projects completed by the 222 students who have graduated from Brevard County's FMNP courses over the last eight years. These projects are not the only thing that the students have contributed, however, as the FMNP has encouraged them to continue to share their newly-acquired knowledge and skills long after their courses have ended. Graduates of the FMNP were instrumental in creating the Friends of Ulamay Sanctuary on Merritt Island and other graduates have gone on to serve as board members for the Friends of Viera Wetlands and the Friends of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge. FMNP Instructor Brandon Smith, Environmental Program Coordinator for Brevard Parks and Recreation, states, "I'm always amazed at the brilliant projects that come out of these courses. I'm even more excited to see the accomplishments of the graduates and feel pride in knowing I had a hand in them." Graduates of the FMNP not only receive a lesson in wildlife ecology, but go on to enrich the natural beauty of Brevard County for residents and visitors alike.

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### Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Needs Your Help with an Important Mink Research Project

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The FWC has initiated a research project to evaluate the status of mink in Florida. Due mainly to the size and behavior of mink, sightings in Florida are uncommon and collecting information on these elusive mammals is difficult.

If you see a mink (dead or alive), please report it to: <https://public.myfwc.com/hsc/mink/>. Here you will find an interactive map application where you can enter the location of your sighting. You can either click on the map or enter a GPS coordinate. Photos are welcome too!

Photos and descriptions of mink can be viewed on the mink reporting site listed above.



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### Indian River Lagoon Photo Contest

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The Indian River Lagoon Program is hosting its annual photo contest.

Thirty winning photos will be featured in the 2013 Indian River Lagoon Calendar. Entry forms and contest rules can be found at [ItsYourLagoon.com](http://ItsYourLagoon.com) (once you enter the site, click "The Lagoon and You" on the right.) The deadline for submissions is July 31, 2012.

For additional information, contact Kathy Hill at the IRL Program at [khill@sjrwmd.com](mailto:khill@sjrwmd.com) or (321) 722-5363.

## 8. Brevard County Freshwater Wetlands Class

**October 22-November 9, 2012**

Registration closes October 15, 2012

(Contact Kathy Hill at 321-722-5363)

(Course Code: fw12-11)

### **Facility Information**

UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension: Lecture Room  
3695 Lake Drive, Cocoa, FL 32926

### **Instructors Information**

Holly Abeels - Marine Science Extension Agent  
Assistants: Linda Seals - Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent and  
Vanessa Spero-Swingle - 4-H Agent  
Organization: UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension  
Phone: 321-633-1702 x235  
Fax: 321-633-1890  
Email: [habeels@ufl.edu](mailto:habeels@ufl.edu)  
Web Site: <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu/>

## **9. Volusia County Freshwater Wetlands Class**

**October 5-November 9, 2012**

*Registration closes September 27, 2012*

(Course Code: fw12-04)

### **Facility Information**

Volusia County Agricultural Center: Auditorium  
3100 East New York Av. DeLand, FL 32724

### **Instructor Information**

David Griffis  
Organization: UF/IFAS Volusia County Extension  
Phone: 386-822-5578  
Fax: 386-822-5767  
Email: [dgriffis@ufl.edu](mailto:dgriffis@ufl.edu)

## **10. Volusia County Coastal Systems Class**

**October 12-November 16, 2012**

*Registration closes on October 4, 2012*

(Course Code: cs12-25)

### **Facility Information**

Marine Discovery Center: Classroom  
520 Barracuda Blvd. New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169

### **Instructors Information:**

Chad Truxall, Managing Director  
Assistant: Lou King, Education Coordinator  
Organization: Marine Discovery Center  
Phone: 386-428-4828  
Fax: 386-428-4825  
Email: [chad@marinediscoverycenter.org](mailto:chad@marinediscoverycenter.org)  
Website: <http://www.marinediscoverycenter.org>

## **11. Indian River County Upland Habitats Class**

**September 11-October 25, 2012**

*Registration closes on September 4, 2012*

(Course Code: uh12-14)

### **Facility Information**

Environmental Learning Center: Lagoon Room  
255 Live Oak Drive, Vero Beach, FL 32963

### **Instructors Information**

Heather Stapleton, Education Coordinator and  
Sarah Rhodes-Ondi, Naturalist  
Organization: Environmental Learning Center  
Phone: 772-589-5050  
Fax: 772-589-7723  
Email: [Heather@DiscoverELC.org](mailto:Heather@DiscoverELC.org)  
Web Site: <http://www.DiscoverELC.org>



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