

THE FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

*A Natural History
Training Program*



Southwest Region Update

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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), 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.

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

Lauren Swanson Recognized for Improving Interpretation Services at Florida State Parks

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

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

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

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

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.



8. Collier County Coastal Systems Class

October 5-26, 2012

Registration closes on September 9, 2012

(Course Code: cs12-24)

Max of 15 students

Facility Information

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center: Room TBA
300 Tower Road, Naples, FL 34113

Instructors' Information

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