



THE FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

A Natural History Training Program

Central East Region Newsletter

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FMNP Welcomes Kate Hellgren

New Program Coordinator Brings Experience and Enthusiasm

We are excited to introduce you to our new Program Coordinator, Mrs. Kate Hellgren.

Kate spent her childhood (outdoors) in coastal Maine. She acquired a B.A. in Biological Sciences from Mount Holyoke College and an M.S. in Wildlife Sciences from Virginia Tech. In addition to her academic credentials, Kate has held coordinator positions (primarily in Environmental Education) at Texas A & M University, Oklahoma State University and Southern Illinois University. She and her husband Eric have two adult children, Tess and Luke. Her favorite hobby is exploring our natural world.

According to Kate, "this opportunity with the FMNP allows me to follow my passion of helping connect people with our wondrous planet. I am very privileged to work with people who desire to enhance and share their knowledge to increase eco-literacy and environmental health. I look forward to meeting many of you at our upcoming conference and encourage you to contact me (I should have a UF email address by the time you read this!) if ever you have any questions or concerns about the FMNP."

Welcome to the FMNP Kate! We are delighted to have you on board!



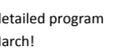
2014 FMNP Conference

Early Registration Deadline Has Been Extended!

The deadline to register for the 2014 FMNP Conference at the early reduced rate of \$225 has been extended to **February 28!** Register today to take part in this exciting, educational, and fun-filled event!



With the exception of the instructor lessons workshop, Friday workshops will be available to all attendees. Additional Friday programming is also currently being added, and a tentative detailed program agenda for the entire conference will be announced soon.



Exhibitor applications are due **February 7!** Do not miss this opportunity to showcase your organization among the statewide FMNP community. If you know of any organizations that may be interested in exhibiting, please help spread the word. For more information and to submit an online exhibitor application, click here.

We want your input! Dr. Mark Deyrup, Senior Research Biologist at the Archbold Biological Station in Venus, Florida, is scheduled to present on Florida's native bees and their natural history. If you have questions about or photos of native bees that you would like addressed in this presentation, please email them to MDeyrup@archbold-station.org with subject line "FMNP Bees".

Stay tuned to the conference website for up-to-date information, and be on the lookout for the detailed program agenda announcement with the list of scheduled topics and presenters. We hope to see you in March!

Congratulations Advanced Florida Master Naturalists!

Graduates Share their Experiences and Thoughts on Program

We are happy to report that 18 students have become Advanced Florida Master Naturalists since September 2013. We congratulate these graduates on their remarkable achievement and applaud their dedication and commitment to learning about Florida's ecology.

Below we share some of the sentiments expressed by our recently-graduated Advanced Florida Master Naturalists in response to these three questions: 1. *What did you like best about your experience with the FMNP?* 2. *What do you plan to do with the knowledge you gained from the Program?* 3. *Anything additional you'd like to add?*

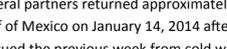
"I was able to learn new methods to understand and learn about Florida's environment. By taking classes at various centers, I was able to visit parks and nature preserves that I might have never visited." - *Sil Crespo, AFMN, November 2013*

"I enjoyed all aspects of the program; Wildlife Monitoring would be my favorite. John [Pipoly] and Kristen [Hoss] are top-notch instructors." "As a business owner, I look forward to educating my clients and practicing what I've learned in the program and also continuing to do volunteer work with schools and kids in need." "Let's try to get more modules/topics incorporated." - *Ludwig Sabillon, AFMN, December 2013*

"Meeting like-minded people and learning all about our environment." "I'm a Florida Trail Activity Leader volunteer and I take people on hikes. With the knowledge I gained I can explain to them what we see and why things are the way they are." "What is next? There is much more to learn." - *Ester Muram, AFMN, December 2013*



"Taking these classes opened a door for me that I never believed would be open. I always wanted to be a person who could study nature and have enough knowledge to make some difference in preserving the natural world around us. Now, in retirement, that has happened. I expect to keep on learning, of course, and I hope to find a "volunteer home" where I can pass on what I have learned to others." - *Melinda Munger, AFMN, December 2013*



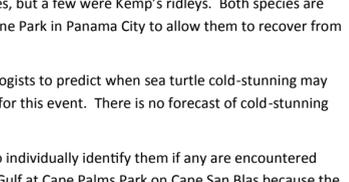
"What I liked best was meeting all of the instructors, students, speakers... everyone! So many like-minded people that I now have a connection with. I had planned to utilize my new-found knowledge by sharing it with others, and as a result of the program and everything I've learned from it, I am now the manager of a nature center and sharing my knowledge everyday with everyone that comes through the nature center." - *Becky Weeks, AFMN, December 2013*

Congratulations to all of our Advanced Florida Master Naturalists!

Rescued Sea Turtles Released

FWC and Partners Release Dozens of Sea Turtles Rescued from Cold in Northwest Florida Waters

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and several partners returned approximately 50 sea turtles to the Gulf of Mexico on January 14, 2014 after the animals were rescued the previous week from cold water temperatures.



"It is very satisfying to be able to release these turtles following the exhaustive effort put in by rescuers last week," said Dr. Allen Foley, FWC sea turtle biologist. "Our staff, partners and volunteers spent many hours braving cold conditions to search for and rescue these cold-stunned turtles."

The sea turtles were rescued between January 7 and January 9, when water temperatures dipped below 50 degrees, causing cold-stunning. Cold-stunned turtles may float listlessly in the water or wash ashore, largely unable to move. In this state, they are susceptible to further effects from the weather, and to attacks by gulls that often involve eye injuries. Many of these turtles would die without human intervention.

Most of the turtles were found in St. Joseph Bay, while others were rescued near Crooked Island and in Big Lagoon in Escambia County. The affected sea turtles were mainly green turtles, but a few were Kemp's ridleys. Both species are endangered. The rescued turtles were all taken to Gulf World Marine Park in Panama City to allow them to recover from exposure to the unusually low water temperatures.

A water-temperature-monitoring buoy in St. Joseph Bay allows biologists to predict when sea turtle cold-stunning may occur. Thanks to this, responders were ready with a plan of action for this event. There is no forecast of cold-stunning conditions returning to the area in the near future.

The turtles were tagged before their release to allow researchers to individually identify them if any are encountered again in the future. Biologists chose to release the turtles into the Gulf at Cape Palms Park on Cape San Blas because the water is warmer and turtles released in the area in the past have returned to St. Joseph Bay, which is a known feeding area.

The public is asked to report any stranded, injured or dead sea turtles to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922) or #FWC or *FWC on a cell phone. Florida residents can help support sea turtle research and response efforts by purchasing a sea turtle license plate at BuyaPlate.com or through their local tax collector.

For more information about Florida's sea turtles, visit MyFWC.com/Research or MyFWC.com/SeaTurtle.

Florida Master Naturalist Arliss Ryan

Graduate Shares her FMNP Experience

If you love nature and being outdoors, living in a northern clime can put a real damper on the fun during the wintertime. So when my husband and I moved to St. Augustine from Newport, RI, in 2003, it was like stepping through a magic door into a world of warmth and sunshine. Already an avid birder, I wanted to learn about everything, from the wildflowers to the live oak trees to the spiders and butterflies.

I signed up for the Florida Master Naturalist Program and began volunteering with environmental organizations. I lead monthly bird walks at Anastasia and Fort Mose Historic State Parks, assist with the surveying of the Anastasia Island beach mouse, and scan the sea for whales with the North Atlantic Right Whale Survey project based at Marineland. It was in my FMNP classes that I first learned about the beach mouse and the right whale, both endangered species that depend on our Florida coast and offshore waters for habitat.

As a Florida Master Naturalist, teacher and writer, I'm especially concerned about education. Providing opportunities for people of all ages to experience and learn about the environment is the first step in protecting it. I'm delighted to have first-time birders and families with children on my bird walks and have written for environmental agencies. My latest novel, Sanctuary, features a group of environmentalists and eccentric birders who are trying to save a rundown estate by turning it into a nature preserve. The pure pleasure of reading aside, fiction can inspire curiosity about issues like land preservation that previously may not have been on someone's radar.

Often when I'm out birding or hiking, the FMNP pins on my hat lead to questions about the program, and I'm happy to fill people in. Whether you're a newcomer to Florida as I was or a longtime resident, it's a great way to learn more about our beautiful environment.

Article courtesy of [Arliss Ryan](#).

Indian River County Freshwater Wetlands Class

March 4 - April 10, 2014

Registration closes at 9:00am on February 27, 2014

[\(Course Code: fw14-09\)](#)

Facility Information

Marine Discovery Center: Lagoon Room
255 Live Oak Drive, Vero Beach, FL 32963

Instructors Information

Heather Stapleton, CIP, Education Director
Assistant: Sarah Rhodes-Ondi, M.S., CIT, CIG, Naturalist
Organization: Environmental Learning Center
Phone: 772.589.5050
Email: heather@discoverelc.org
Web site: <http://www.discoverelc.org>

Volusia County Coastal Systems Class

February 7 - March 14, 2014

Registrations received after 10:00am on February 3, 2013

will receive their course manual on Day 2.
[\(Course Code: cs14-05\)](#)

Facility Information

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

Instructors Information

Chad Truxall and Lou King
Assistant: Joel Wooster
Organization: Marine Discovery Center
Phone: 386-428-4828
Fax: 386-428-4825
Email: chad@marinediscoverycenter.org
Web site: <http://marinediscoverycenter.org>

Volusia County Coastal Systems Class

April 1 - May 6, 2014

Registration closes at 9:00am on March 26, 2014

[\(Course Code: cs14-01\)](#)

Facility Information

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

Instructors Information

David Griffiths
Organization: UF/IFAS Volusia County Extension
Phone: 386-822-5578
Fax: 386-822-5767
Email: dgriffis@ufl.edu

Brevard County Habitat Evaluation Class

March 14-22, 2014

Registration closes at 10:00am on March 10, 2014
(Course Code: E14-02)

Facilities Information

Riverwalk: A Family Park: Riverwalk Nature Center
5355 US Highway 1, Rockledge, FL 32955

March 15 only

Sam's House at Pine Island
6195 N Tropical Trail, Merritt Island, FL 32953

Instructors Information

Holly Abeels - Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent, University of Florida/IFAS, Brevard County Extension
Brandon Smith - Environmental Program Supervisor, Riverwalk Nature Center - Brevard County Parks and Recreation
Phone: 321-433-4490 (Brandon)
Fax: 321-433-4492 (Brandon)
Email: brandon.smith@brevardparks.com
Web Site: <http://www.brevardparks.com>



www.MasterNaturalist.org