# Central West Region Newsletter

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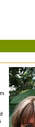
## FMNP Welcomes Kate Hellgren

**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 wonderful resources. 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 being planned, 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**

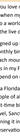
We are happy to report that 18 students have become Advanced Florida Master Naturalists since September 2013. We congratulate these graduates on their remarkable achievement and applaud their dedication and commitment to learning about Florida's ecology.

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 [Popov] and Kristen [Moss] 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." - *Esther Munzer, 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 (1922) 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 climate 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 2001, 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 their 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.*

## Local News & Events

**Hillsborough County SOLO Wilderness First Aid Training Course**

Hillsborough River State Park, Between Tampa and Zephyrhills FL
Saturday & Sunday, Feb 23 & 24

SOLO wilderness medicine certification is recognized by organizations such as state EMS licensing boards, professional guiding organizations, the US Coast Guard, the American Canoe Association (ACA), the Continuing Education, Coordinating Board for Emergency Medical Services (CECEMS) and countless others.

SOLO certified guides enjoy employment at Outward Bound, the Appalachian Mountain Club, as well as camps, ski patrols and other similar organizations. Our SOLO instructional staff is recognized as one of the best trained and most progressive in the industry.

If you have any questions, call us at (352) 325-1277 or reserve your spot at www.GatorCPR.com.

## Pinellas County Freshwater Wetlands Class

**February 7 - March 3, 2014**

Registrations received after 10:00am on February 4, 2013 will receive their course manual on Day 2.
(Course Code: fw14-05)

Facility Information
Bill Jackson Sporting Goods Store: Program Room
9501 U.S. 19 North, Pinellas Park, Florida 33782

Instructors Information
Joanne Murphy, Wildlife Biologist & Environmental Educator and
Brian Lane, Ecologist & Environmental Educator
Organization: Sensing Nature, LLC – Environmental Education, Ethical Ecotours, Nature Products
Phone: 727-397-2306
Fax: 727-320-0842
Email: jmurphy@sensingnature.com
Website: www.sensingnature.com

## DeSoto County Freshwater Wetlands Class

**March 15 - April 19, 2014**

Registration closes at 9:00am on March 10, 2014
(Course Code: fw14-02)

Facility Information
DeSoto County Extension Office
2150 NE Roan St, Arcadia, FL 34266

Instructors Information
Jerry Waters & Linda Waters
Organization: DeSoto County Extension Service
Phone: 863-993-4846
Fax: 863-993-4849
Email: lndwters@gmail.com
Web site: http://desoto.ifas.ufl.edu/

## Charlotte County Upland Habitats Class

**March 7 - April 11, 2014**

Registration closes at 9:00am on March 3, 2014
(Course Code: uh14-07)

Classroom Facility Information
Charlotte County Eastport Environmental Campus: Training Room
25550 Harborview Rd., Suite 3, Port Charlotte, FL 33980

Instructors Information
Betty Staugler
Assistant: Jamie Reynolds
Organization: UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County & Florida Sea Grant
Phone: 941-764-4346
Fax: 941-764-4343
Email: staugler@ufl.edu
Web Site: http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/




Contact

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