



SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

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FMNP Festival: 20th Anniversary Celebration

By Dr. Martin Main

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we celebrate the 20th year of the FMNP and there is much for which to be grateful. The FMNP has gone through some big changes over the years, but perhaps none greater than those required by the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, we established 100% online courses and now offer online, hybrid, and traditional in-person course formats. These different formats present opportunities for

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UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu

individuals to engage in course formats that best fit their needs and preferred learning environments. Because COVID-19 remains a threat we ask all persons participating in hybrid and in-person courses be vaccinated to protect your classmates, instructors and yourselves.

The changes we implemented and the dedication and willingness of our amazing network of FMNP instructors to offer courses in different formats enabled the FMNP to survive 2020 and come roaring back in 2021. As of this writing, during this year we have completed 62 courses, have 12 more in registration, and anticipate more courses to be added.

This success is nicely timed to celebrate our 20-year FMNP anniversary, which will culminate with the FMNP Festival during November 1-7. The FMNP Festival will include online presentations and in-person activities that we plan to organize with the help of FMNP Friends Groups and others. See the schedule on the following page.

Find all information on the festival, including registration pages when they become available [here](#).

If you would like to ensure the FMNP has a permanent program leader and continues to offer courses for the next 20 years, please consider donating to the FMNP endowment. Note, that all donations during 2021 will receive an FMNP commemorative 20-year pin! Donate to the FMNP endowment [here](#).

Happy Trails,

Marty



FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM
20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:

FMNP FESTIVAL

Virtual Events

November 1-7

MONDAY, 6:30 PM
AUDUBON FLORIDA

TUESDAY, 10:30 AM
OFFICE OF GREENWAYS & TRAILS

WEDNESDAY, 3:30 PM
FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR COALITION

THURSDAY, 6:30 PM
FLORIDA WILDFLOWER FOUNDATION

FRIDAY, 10:30 AM
FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

Join us in person

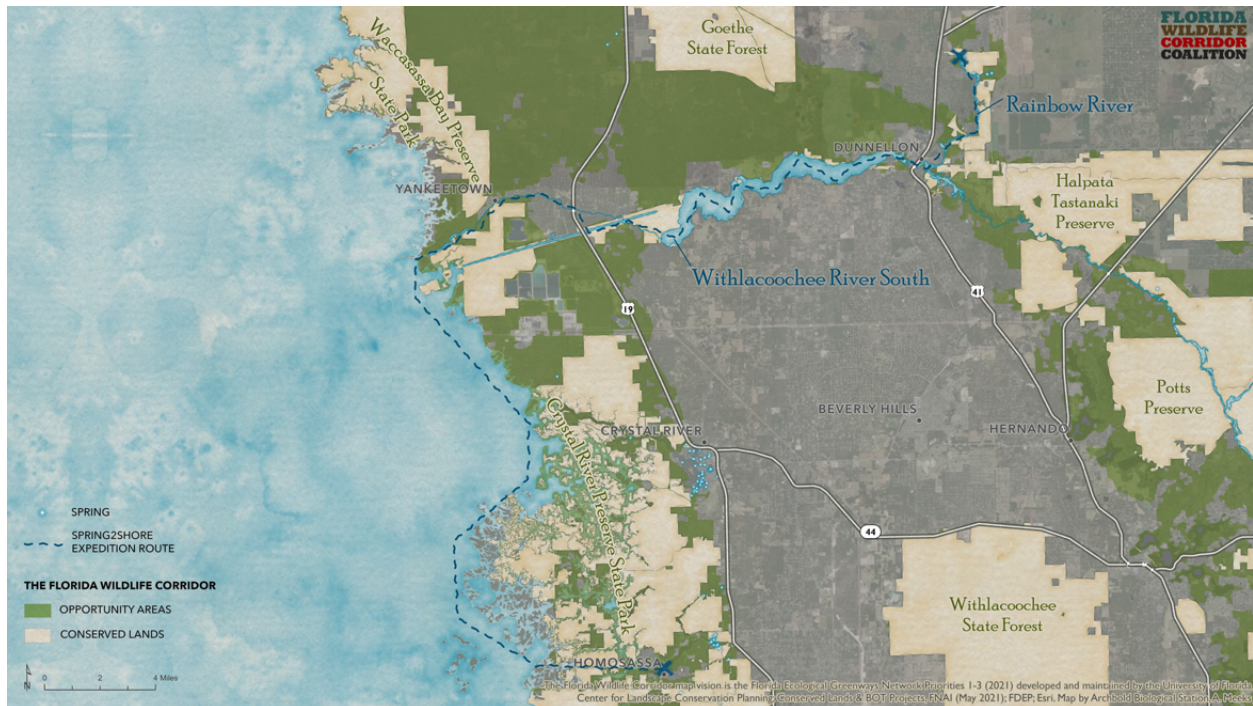
SATURDAY & SUNDAY

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Florida Master Naturalist Program Assists Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition Expedition

By Haley Hanson and Nicole Brand



Route of the Spring2Shore Expedition.

The connectivity of landscapes is more important now than ever. With increased habitat loss and fragmentation, wildlife need places to move and roam. Plants require areas that are not disturbed.

How do we combat the ever-present threat of encroachment on natural spaces? The Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition has some answers. For decades, this organization has advocated for a connected corridor to be preserved across Florida from the Everglades to Okefenokee.

In order to protect a connected wildlife corridor, the Corridor Coalition needs to get to know the areas' wildlife, landscape, and potential obstacles to protection. Expeditions are one way to work toward this goal.

The group's first expedition was inspired by the movements of a GPS-collared black bear named M34. Researchers observed M34's movement across the Florida landscape over the year and noted where he spent his time, his perilous road crossings (including I-4), and the distance he traversed. Overall, M34 moved about 500 miles in about eight weeks. Utilizing some of the same spaces as M34, the Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition trekked from the Everglades to



FMNP instructor, Lars Andersen, listens as the young trekkers share their recent knowledge of learning the difference between water hemlock and elderflowers.
(Credit: Alex Freeze)

Okefenokee, in order to bring awareness to the vulnerable green spaces that are necessary for animals to travel across the state.

Over the years, the group has completed a number of expeditions, all highlighting spaces that need protection and bringing much needed attention to protect ecological connectivity throughout the state.

This year, they embarked on a new kind of Expedition to see the Corridor through the eyes of a younger generation. Trekkers Ava Moody (16 years old, rising junior), Marin Best (14 years old, rising freshman), and Mallori Best (16 years old, rising junior) will share the message of corridor conservation to new audiences. The FMNP was invited to help with the Expedition, named Spring2Shore.

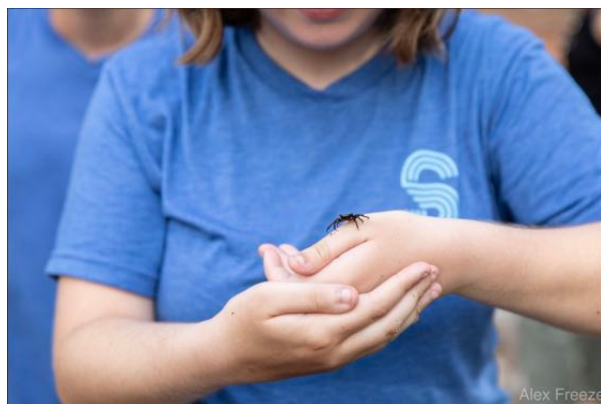
Before the expedition began, Florida Master Naturalist instructors Jeanne Murphy and Brian Lane with Sensing Nature, Kelly Ussia with St. Johns County Parks and Recreation, and Jennifer Hunt, Rachael Cravens, and Jackie Rolly with Oakland Nature Preserve gave their input and offered suggestions on how to best formulate a youth expedition through the wild Florida landscape that fostered educational connections for the youth trekkers. These conversations were critical to the planning process.

The Expedition covered 50 miles across 4 days, beginning at Rainbow Springs headwaters and ending at the Gulf of Mexico. This region is particularly important for conservation efforts, as there is a narrow corridor just north of Dunnellon, which is

partly within the city limits. The narrower a corridor is, the more at risk it is to be severed.

Lars Andersen, lead FMNP instructor in Alachua County, came out to guide, instruct and paddle with the trekkers throughout their journey. An FMNP instructor for over a decade, Lars has been teaching about Florida's ecosystems for much longer. Through his business, Adventure Outpost, he leads ecotours of over 60 waterways across Florida, making him uniquely suited to explore with Spring2Shore.

On the first day, the trekkers paddled past a bottleneck connection point between the Ocala National Forest and Goethe State Forest. This region, where the Rainbow River and Withlacoochee River flow, are beautiful and diverse wild places with vital connections to the Gulf. Not only is Rainbow River exceptionally important for conservation efforts, Lars shared, but it highlights many changes that springs and waterways across Florida are experiencing.



*"I consider my interests to be varied but mainly my love of the biodiverse ecosystems here in Florida are some of the greatest things I enjoy the most."-
Ava Moody (Credit: Alex Freeze)*

Many springs in Florida, including Rainbow Springs, have lost a significant amount of flow due to the reduction of water in the aquifer due to human consumption and agriculture. Reaching the gulf, the group saw the consequences of human impacts on the springs: miles and miles of dead trees due to less fresh water entering the estuary.

It is not all bad news, though. Lars was inspired by the trekkers and expects that their efforts and activism can help protect the springs.

"Spending four days on the river with this crew and teaching these three amazing girls about the nature of Rainbow and

Withlacoochee rivers was a high point in my guiding/writing career," Lars said. "One of the highlights of the trek was when the microphones were momentarily turned off for adjustments and the girls kept asking questions about the geology and wildlife of the river. At that moment, I realized they were all-in with the efforts to preserve wild Florida."

Nature Coast towns like Dunnellon, Yankeetown, Crystal River and Homosassa, depend on the geographic Florida Wildlife Corridor. Those communities' economies depend on visitors snorkeling, swimming and paddling the springs and rivers, going

on manatee tours, hiking and biking the trails, eating in local restaurants and staying in local hotels. Land protection within the corridor helps sustain the wildlife and habitat that supports these economies.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor already exists; it isn't something that needs to be "created." Just last month, the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act was passed, allocating money and resources that will support making the Coalition's mission a reality.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition will be joining us Nov. 3 at 3:30 pm on Zoom during the FMNP Festival to give an overview on the conservation science of the Corridor and an opportunity for participants to explore some of the Spring2Shore path with the Corridor Coalition and FMNP instructors.

Interested in taking a tour with Lars? Find more information about Adventure Outpost [here](#).

Florida Atala Butterflies Surging Back on the Florida East Coast

By Ken Gioeli

Butterfly enthusiasts are excited about the apparent seasonal resurgence of the rare atala butterfly on the east coast of Florida.

According to Sandy Koi, FIU Doctoral Student studying atala butterflies "Atala butterflies have a fairly consistent bi-annual population cycle, with increased numbers in late winter (January) and late spring to early summer (June), but there are also larger cycles of 7-8 years when the butterfly erupts in higher-than-normal numbers. The butterfly has been documented now in virtually every county on the east side of Florida, with new colonies dispersing freely from those originally introduced by scientists. Home gardens are vital to the survival of this butterfly as our natural areas



Atala butterfly photo (Credit: K. Gioeli)

disappear, and we urge people to be a part of the recovery of this once-thought-to-be-extinct specialist insect!”

In St. Lucie County, the Atala Steppingstone Project is designed to educate residents about the plight of this rare butterfly and the landscape practices that can encourage their continued survival. In the warm summer months of 2021, it appears as if populations of atala butterflies are resurging in coastal areas of the community close to the Indian River and St. Lucie River estuaries.

The Florida atala butterfly was thought to be extinct from 1937 until 1959 due to overharvest of its host plant, *Zamia integrifolia*, commonly known as coontie. In recent years, populations of Florida atala butterflies have been rediscovered and seem to be thriving in Florida. Unfortunately, its survival is precarious and not certain. Factors that can aid survival of atala butterflies include an understanding of its unique lifecycle, availability of toxic coontie plants for caterpillar consumption, and protection from insecticide use. This is a beautiful native butterfly. Its black satiny wings are speckled with an iridescent turquoise shimmer.

If you would like to learn more about atala butterflies or report a population, visit my blog [here](#).



Atala Caterpillars (Credit: K. Gioeli)

FMNP ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST



The FMNP Annual We Love Nature Photo Contest highlights the natural beauty we love in Florida and the amazing talent of our Florida Master Naturalist family



Cigar Orchid (*Cyrtopodium punctatum*). Photo by Prem Subrahmanyam, winner of the People's Choice contest in 2020 .

- Submit your photos to one of three categories: Flora, Fauna, and Florida Scenes
- Each photographer may enter up to 1 photo in each category (photos from previous years are not eligible)
- There will be one People's Choice winner chosen via Facebook
- There will be one winner chosen from each category by the FMNP Office

read the rules and
enter the contest
[here](#)

contest deadline is
September 31st
11:59 pm

Florida Wildflower Foundation

Director on her Master Naturalist Background

Interview by Haley Hanson

For our 20th anniversary, we've released a series of monthly blogs. Our July blog featured an exceptional Florida Master Naturalist, Lisa Roberts. A Florida native, Lisa serves as the executive director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation where she has done incredible work protecting Florida's resources. Join us during the [FMNP Festival](#) to hear more from the [Florida Wildflower Foundation](#)!

Hi, Lisa. Thanks so much for joining us! Tell us about your background.

I'm proud to be a lifelong Central Floridian. As a child, I was fortunate to have parents who loved the outdoors. They had a houseboat, and I spent many a weekend with my brothers and sister exploring and fishing on the middle St. Johns River and its tributaries. When he could, my dad would beach the boat somewhere, and we'd set out to explore. At home, we had free rein to roam our neighborhood and its adjoining orange groves, lakes and wetlands. I also experienced a lot of natural Florida from the backs of my horses. Our day-long trail rides often would cross the Econlockhatchee River east of Orlando and traverse pine

flatwoods, scrub and oak hammock ecosystems. Sometimes we would swim the horses in a spring-fed lake near the University of Central Florida. All that play in Florida's great outdoors gave me a great appreciation for nature and its diverse ecosystems, wildlife and plants.



Lisa on top of the houseboat when she was 9 years old. It was beached on Hontoon Island on the St. Johns River (now Hontoon Island State Park).

Career-wise, I was a writer and editor at the Orlando Sentinel for more than three decades (I started in my teens!). As travel editor, I'd often write about my outdoor adventures and trips, including those in Florida. Later, as a senior writer, I would pitch stories that would take me outdoors – like the time I covered three women hiking the entire Florida Trail. I spent a day in downpours with them and came home soggy and cold, but with a big smile on my face.

After leaving the Sentinel in 2007, I founded a communications firm. The Florida Wildflower Foundation became one of my clients in 2008. Before I knew it, I was closing my business to become its first full-time executive director.

I love being outdoors whenever possible. I enjoy hiking, kayaking, boating, gardening with native wildflowers and plants, and oil painting *en plein air* wherever I find Florida's natural beauty.

How did you get involved with the Master Naturalist Program? When and where did you take FMNP courses?

A friend had told me about the courses, which I really wanted to take. But it wasn't until I owned my own company that I could finagle the time needed to take them. I took the three core courses in 2008 and 2009 at the UF/IFAS Extension Volusia County office in DeLand. David Griffis, who at the time was the Extension director and a soil scientist, was our instructor. Boy, did I learn a lot about dirt! He never missed a chance to break out his auger. Randy Sleister, a biologist with Volusia County Land Acquisition and Management, assisted along with Linda Evans, Master Gardener coordinator. We certainly had the dream team of Master Naturalist instructors! Not only did they know everything, they made things fun.

I had a terrific time, learned



From left: David Griffis, Stacey Matrazzo (the Florida Wildflower Foundation Program Manager), Lisa Roberts and Craig Spence-Thomas. Stacey, Craig and Lisa are all Master Naturalists who took the courses together, and David was their instructor. They had a mini-reunion at the 2019 Florida Wildflower & Garden Festival in DeLand.

so much and made several good friends, including David, who still volunteers at the annual Florida Wildflower and Garden Festival in DeLand. My favorite module was Coastal - we learned to cast a net at Ponce Inlet in Daytona Beach, paddled Callalisa Creek in New Smyrna Beach, and pretty much hijacked the Extension van in order to score ice cream on the way home from Marineland, where we learned about Sea Grant projects.



Lisa and her sea kayak.

Not only are you a Master Naturalist, but you are the Executive Director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Tell us about the organization and your work there.

The Foundation is the only organization in the state that protects, connects and expands Florida native wildflower habitat. We are devoted to teaching and demonstrating the important roles wildflowers play in healthy ecosystems and their ties to our own health.

We work statewide to establish “habitat highways” of wildflowers to help pollinators move through urban areas and along roads to reach food crops, managed forests and natural ecosystems.

Outreach and education are the largest slice of our pie. Our website, www.FlaWildflowers.org, is the world’s best source of Florida native wildflower information. You can learn about different species, download publications, apply for grants, and find out how to join or form a local alliance of volunteers to protect roadside wildflowers. We are also very active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and have a great selection of videos at [YouTube.com/flawildflowers](https://www.youtube.com/flawildflowers).

Our planting and conservation program consists of grants for wildflower demonstration landscapes and school gardens. We also teach people to conserve roadside wildflowers through requests for reduced mowing. The Florida Department of Transportation is our closest partner in this effort. Through reduced mowing, the department saves about \$1,000 per mile per year in maintenance costs. In Santa Rosa



County alone, this effort has saved 700 miles of roadside wildflowers and \$70,000 annually.

Finally, our research program annually supports a University of Florida student studying native wildflowers. We conduct our own research projects, too. Currently, we are surveying roadside vegetation in North and Central Florida to find wildflower habitat. Once located, we write management plans that allow it to grow and flourish. We are also studying how to control the weed seed bank when establishing large wildflower plots from seed. In partnership with Lake County, we've established four weed seed bank test plots at PEAR Park in Tavares and are applying different establishment treatments, including soil inversion.

You've accomplished so much with the Florida Wildflower Foundation and reached so many people! Can you tell us about your favorite project or initiative?

My journalist past is probably why I love developing publications like our 20 Easy-to-Grow Wildflowers magazine. We have many helpful handouts and brochures, too, such as individual publications about wildflowers for birds, bees and butterflies. Our Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide is filled with lessons and activities for classrooms. Teachers can use individual activities or teach whole units. We've had requests from educators all over the United States to download it. Of course, in all of our publications, we lobby heavily for the use of native wildflowers and plants in landscapes.

But I'm also a real research geek. I love working with the people we do – botanists, horticulturists, native plant growers, biologists – because knowledge rubs off. I'm fascinated by what I learn, and the more I learn, the more I want to know.

How has the FMNP impacted you? Does your FMNP training play a role in your position as Executive Director?

The FMNP courses provided the underlying bedrock I needed to fully understand Florida's ecosystems and what makes them tick. They were a springboard into the deeper, more detailed conservation topics I weave through each day. I am constantly drawing on what I learned in the courses.

Florida is facing a number of different environmental challenges. Where do you think Master Naturalists could make the most difference? What work would you like to see the next generation of Master Naturalists address?

Florida faces profound challenges – from sea level rise due to climate change to the loss of natural lands from development. Master Naturalists have all the tools needed to effectively educate and advocate for actions needed to counter these challenges.

By taking opportunities to educate residents and local, state and federal lawmakers, Master Naturalists can make a difference. In the days to come, our voices will be more important than ever in influencing policy that protects land and water resources.

Do you have any advice for current or future Master Naturalists?

We are trained to interpret and educate. Talk to anyone who will listen about Florida's unique natural lands, waters and creatures. Get involved and help to create opportunities that let people experience natural Florida first-hand. Only through personal experiences will people begin to connect and care.

And don't wait – take as many Master Naturalists courses as possible and share your knowledge widely by volunteering for conservation organizations. Florida needs you now.

Where can Master Naturalists learn more about the Florida Wildflower Foundation and how can we help?

Visit www.FlaWildflowers.org to learn more about our work for Florida's native wildflowers and the wildlife depending on them. Get involved – if your county doesn't yet have a Wildflower Resolution to protect roadside wildflowers, round up some Master Naturalist friends and work to get one in place.

The Florida Wildflower Foundation is a non-profit organization solely supported by donations. Our largest funding source is donations generated through the [State Wildflower license plate](#). Each time the plate is purchased or renewed, our Foundation receives a \$15 donation for education, planting and research. If you want to contribute to our efforts, the plate helps immensely ... and it's beautiful! You also can make a one-time donation or become a member on our website. Additionally, we offer opportunities to serve on the board of directors or on one of our committees. It does take a village!

Hear more from the Florida Wildflower Foundation during the [FMNP Festival](#) on November 4 at 6:30 pm.



Lisa with pitcher plants along State Road 65 in the Apalachicola National Forest. SR 65 is widely known as the best place in the Southeast to see wildflowers.

INCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP



The Florida Master Naturalist Program is committed to celebrating diversity of people, thought and opinion and to promote inclusiveness, respect and equal opportunity for everyone.

- Scholarship priority will be given to new applicants, those from historically underrepresented groups, and/or those in most need of financial assistance.
- The scholarship is available to any Florida resident or person residing in Florida more than 6 months out of the year
- Scholarships awarded will cover the entire cost of one FMNP core module or special topics course
- Scholarships are awarded semi-annually. The number of scholarships awarded each year will be dependent on funding.

FIND MORE INFORMATION
AND APPLY HERE



Find information on our other scholarships here

Master Naturalist Program Inspires Action on Environment

By Dr. J. Scott Angle



For our 20th anniversary, we've released a series of monthly blogs. Our August blog featured FMNP instructors and graduates around Pensacola Bay, where education and ecotourism meet to influence the surrounding area.

Once upon a time, the Blackwater River was a conveyor belt of prosperity. Loggers floated longleaf pine trunks to the mills.

But once the longleafs were all cut, the mills, landings, and structures that supported the industry were abandoned. These structures now whisper like ghosts about a bygone time.

Archaeologist Nicole Grinnan, educator Krystal Brown, and historian Mike Thomin of the University of West Florida (UWF) interpret those whispers. Grinnan and Thomin belong to the Florida Public Archaeology Network, and Brown is a UWF educator at the Arcadia Mill Archaeological Site. They had always translated the whispers into a cultural story, but they sensed there was more to that story in the sheer beauty of the river and its surroundings.

So the interpreters sought out other interpreters— Florida Master Naturalist Instructors Carrie Stevenson, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County coastal sustainability agent, and Rick O'Connor and Chris Verlinde, Florida Sea Grant agents—to help translate the river's whispers. They've taught hundreds of local residents about the natural history of the Blackwater, Pensacola Bay and other waters through FMNP courses.



Mike Thomin leads a discussion about local history.

An FMNP Coastal Systems course inspired Grinnan, Brown and Thomin to invite classmates and community residents for a floating tour of the Blackwater. People showed up with kayaks, canoes and even standup paddleboards.

The trio had intended to organize a river tour before enrolling in FMNP, but taking the course required them to *do* something with the knowledge they'd acquired and to do it on a deadline. The history-based kayak tours of the Blackwater River and Pensacola Bay were born.

The tours are more effective than a land-based lecture, the guides insist, because participants experience what they're learning. While the tours are now on hold, they intend to launch again as soon as they can.

The tour itself may represent an important part of the region's future economy—ecotourism. Santa Rosa County government recognizes this with its Beaches to Woodlands annual tour, which aims to attract coastal tourists inland to enjoy spectacular hiking, canoeing and bird watching. And, of course, to spend money while they're at it.

FMNP and ecotours operate on the premise that when locals care about the natural beauty of their community, they will support uses of their natural surroundings that balance ecology and economy.

In fact, Brown argues, the beauty of the waters and a vision for how prosperity could flow from them are what made the Panhandle's coast attractive to settlers in the first place. That vision requires updating 500 years later.

The river, long dormant as a route for floating timber, could once again spring to economic life through ecotourism.

You can learn more about the FMNP and find courses in your area [here](#). Courses are held year-round and are offered across the state. Keep an eye on the schedule for upcoming classes lead by Carrie, Rick, and Chris.

For information on future kayak tours, contact Grinnan at ngrinnan@uwf.edu. You can support local natural history education through the FMNP [endowment](#) or discover other ways to participate at www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu.

Past graduates testify that it got them a better job, inspired them to start a business, connected them in a new way with their grandchildren, improved their teaching, or simply gave them delight that they could identify the mockingbird by its song.

The big lesson that an Extension coastal sustainability agent teaches is that to protect this as a place people want to live or to visit, its ecology and economy have to coexist

for 20 years like FMNP, 500 like European-settled Florida, or millennia like the native people whose culture archaeologists like Grinnan study. That's sustainability.

This article was modified from its initial publication with the Pensacola News Journal. You can find the original article [here](#).



Love Birds? Help Audubon do the Critical Science that Protects Them

By Erika Zambello

For more than a century, Audubon has encouraged people to take care of the places that make Florida special. Using science to guide our work and birdlife to measure ecosystem health, Audubon Florida works to protect land, water, and wildlife.

But we need your help! Community scientists across the state work with Audubon staff to protect and monitor some of Florida's most iconic wildlife. Will you join us?

EagleWatch

Based at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, Audubon's EagleWatch program seeks information about Bald Eagles, active nest locations, and possible disturbances or threats to nesting activities. As one of the premier community science programs in Florida, EagleWatch works to protect approximately 40% of the state's nesting pairs

with the help of dedicated volunteers currently monitoring more than 700 eagle nests. Learn more [here](#).



Florida Scrub-Jay. Photo: Shay Saldana/Audubon Photography Awards

Coastal Bird Stewards

Beach-nesting birds, including terns and plovers, are struggling to survive in Florida, often because of the intense disturbance by recreational beach goers. Flushed from their camouflaged nests in the sand, adult birds watch helplessly as eggs and chicks are exposed to the hot sun and predators, or are crushed by unwary pedestrians, dogs, or drivers.

We recruit volunteers to assist with on-the-ground wildlife and habitat management. The benefits to wildlife are immediate and connect people with nature. This connection is a gateway for volunteers to quickly become educated on regional conservation issues, stay engaged, and move from volunteerism to advocacy. To find out if your local beach is in need of a steward, email flconservation@audubon.org.

Project Colony Watch

Because Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries manage and monitor dozens of island nesting sites across many counties in the Tampa Bay region, Audubon staff are stretched to manage all these areas. A dedicated network of "Colony Watch" volunteers help manage and monitor the sites and nesting activity and alert staff if something is amiss at one of the nesting islands.

Colony Watch volunteers provide vital information on nesting species in addition to keeping a close eye on the well-being of the colony. Together with our partners at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Sanctuary staff have removed unauthorized hunting blinds, worked to reduce human disturbance to nesting birds, and recorded critical colony data. We are grateful to have such committed volunteers who are passionate about protecting the birds.

Want to help? Contact Mark Rachal at Mark.Rachal@audubon.org about joining Colony Watch efforts.

Count Florida Scrub-Jays with Jay Watch

The Florida Scrub-Jay is our state's only endemic bird species, found nowhere else in the world. It was listed as federally Threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the Endangered Species Act in 1987, largely due to loss of its native scrub habitat and decades of fire suppression that allowed the scrub to become overgrown and unsuitable for Scrub-Jays. While mowing of too-tall oak scrub can open the bare sand patches needed by the jays for predator detection and for caching acorns, fire is still needed to remove debris left on the ground after mowing. And some of the rarer scrub plants require fire to set seed and reproduce.

We train and support volunteers to conduct scientific surveys that measure annual nesting success and count the total number of Florida Scrub-Jays at more than 40 sites in 19 counties. The success of the Jay Watch program, and the program's contributions to the recovery of Florida Scrub-Jays, depends upon dedicated volunteers who survey the jay areas each summer.

Remarkably, in just 2019 alone, 215 volunteers invested over 1,951 hours sharpening their skills in on-site trainings and performing field surveys across the state.

To learn more about Florida Scrub-Jays and learn how you can help, check out our newest Jay Watch update [here](#).

Duval FMNP Grads Produce Seagrass Video for Final Project

By Dr. Martin Main

An ambitious group of FMNP students in a recent Duval Coastal Systems course produced a video about seagrasses for their final project. The 10-min video, which can be viewed [here](#), includes interviews with people about their knowledge of seagrasses, expert interviews about the importance of seagrasses and the threats they face, and actions all of us can take to help protect seagrasses - especially when boating. The video also includes a segment on getting involved with seagrass restoration efforts, which Casey and her daughter show can be fun as well as valuable for restoration efforts. Developing videos such as this for group final projects appears to be a lot of fun and can provide valuable educational tools. It is important to obtain signed permissions when interviewing and recording participants. We appreciate the team did this and submitted the signed permissions to fmnpcoordinator@gmail.com for our FMNP records. An FMNP interview permissions form can be obtained [here](#) or ask your FMNP instructor if you are interested in recording interviews for your final project.



Space Coast Friends Group meets the Eastern Indigo Snake

By Kerri Lubeski

The Space Coast Regional Friends Group slithered through The Orianne Center for Indigo Conservation (OCIC) this past May for one of our first in-person field trips since the pandemic. The OCIC is operated by the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens and is the only captive breeding facility for the Eastern Indigo Snake. The OCIC's mission is to re-establish this threatened species into its former range. Snakes hatched at the OCIC are reintroduced in regions where historic populations have disappeared.



Space Coast Friends Group (Credit: Kerri Lubeski)

A dozen of the Space Coast Friends Group of the FMNP traveled to Eustis for an up close, behind the scenes tour led by Dr. James Bogan, Director and Daphne Keys, CFRE Development Director. What's the first thing you visit after a long car ride? The bathroom! One wouldn't expect the bathrooms to be very exciting but they have some great historical photographs of snake stewards from the 1940's and 50's.

The tour begins with Dr. Bogan sharing the history of the property and buildings, including what the staff does on a day-to-day basis and what these snakes need to thrive. As a bonus they are even breeding newts! The facilities are well maintained and it was very exciting to get up close to the snakes in their indoor and outdoor habitats. Once the snakes are ready to be reintroduced into the wild they take a road trip. Between 2010 and 2019, 169 eastern indigo snakes have been released in the Conecuh National Forest in southern Alabama. Between 2017 and 2019, 47 eastern

indigo snakes have been released in The Nature Conservancy's Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve in the Florida Panhandle. Master naturalists are hungry for knowledge but after a 90 minute tour we worked up an appetite and the staff were kind enough to serve us a BBQ lunch. If you haven't had the chance to visit the Center we highly recommend contacting them and making a reservation to tour the facilities.

Master Naturalists Meetup at Adams Cattle Ranch

By Ken Gioeli, St Lucie Co Lead Instructor & Extension Agent

The UF/IFAS Florida Master Naturalist Program celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2021. As part of this celebration, the UF/IFAS St Lucie County Extension conducted a meetup of Master Naturalist graduates for a morning safari at Adams Ranch in western St Lucie County on June 25th. During this event, St Lucie County's Master Naturalist Instructor Ken Gioeli guided participants on a search for Florida's wildlife as the sun rose at Adams Ranch. Participants saw plenty of deer, birds and other wildlife. Deer were abundant in the pastures and hammocks throughout the property. Of course, cattle are always abundant. So Master Naturalists took a fun walk on the wild-side!



Photo credits to Cristina Carrizosa UF/IFAS

OPPORTUNITIES

The FLTWS Citizen Conservation Award

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society is seeking nominations for the Citizen Conservation Award. The Citizen Conservation Award, which is sponsored by the Florida Master Naturalist Program, was created in 2010 to recognize individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to conservation of Florida's wildlife resources. Achievements can be related to management, restoration, education, or protection. The person or group considered for this award does not have to be a member of the Florida chapter of The Wildlife Society.

This award is intended for non-professionals and small, grassroots groups that have worked to achieve local or statewide conservation impacts. This award is not intended for professional activists, educators, resource managers, or scientists, nor is this award intended for organizations that hire paid staff. Although Florida TWS acknowledges the contributions of these types of professionals and organizations, the Citizen Conservation Award is intended to acknowledge important citizen contributions that often go unrecognized.

To submit a nomination, please visit our nomination submission form [HERE](#).

Taylor County Scallop Count

Join us in the citizen science and volunteer-based effort to count scallops and estimate the scallop population in Taylor County waters (Steinhatchee) on Wednesday September 8, 2021, from 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM. We will be using a standardized methodology that will help FWC scallop research specialists estimate the post-season situation of the scallop population.

We need volunteers of all ages and with all capabilities as there are many roles you can help with: Captains (with boat), divers (snorkel and/or scuba), support staff (provide and collect forms, check in/out volunteer groups, etc.).

Please [click here](#) for more information and to register.

Cypress Cove Landkeepers Naturalist Guide

Currently seeking active naturalists to lead guided trail walks on this unique Hardwood Hammock Habitat. Trails are primitive with cavernous limestone paths that lead to an ephemeral pond that is filled in the rainy season. As well as a slough area through old growth cypress trees. Must be knowledgeable on native flora and fauna, and enjoy teaching about such. Trails are actively monitored and frequented by Florida panthers, black bears, bob cats, amongst other wildlife. There is a boardwalk leading to the education center, but the trails are left natural, therefore they do have some obstacles: poison ivy, fire ants, mosquitos, many invasive plants, venomous snakes, limestone, and trees to navigate under and around. If you're interested in getting involved please reach out to Christy Duff at christy@cclandkeepers.com

EVENTS

FMNP Friends Groups Monthly Programs

This program series was created by FMNP friends group facilitators and leaders to encourage FMNP Friends groups' engagement throughout the state. These programs will be presented on the second Tuesday evening of each month starting at 7:00 PM ET. Each FMNP Friends group is being encouraged to host a monthly program with a regional speaker as their guest.

Upcoming programs include:

- September 14, 2021: Dr. Dan Evans from the Sea Turtle Conservancy
- October 12, 2021: Dr. Pamela Soltis on Climate Change and Florida's Fauna

- November 9, 2021: Kenneth D. Meyer, PhD
- Executive Director, Avian Research and Conservation Institute
- Research on the conservation biology of three notable Florida raptors: Swallow-tailed Kites, Snail Kites, and Southeastern American Kestrels
- December 14, 2021: Arnold Brunell, FWC Fish and Wildlife Research, alligators and crocodiles of Florida

Register [here](#) in advance!

Nature Knowledge

The Nature Knowledge program hosts expert speakers to share current scientific knowledge on topics affecting nature in Florida, supported by UF/IFAS Natural Resources Extension. This program provides continuing education for IFAS Extension personnel, volunteers, and program participants, college/university faculty and students from across Florida, natural resource professionals, and environmental educators. See the attached flyer and feel free to distribute. This program is open to anyone! Find registration links and past recordings [here](#).



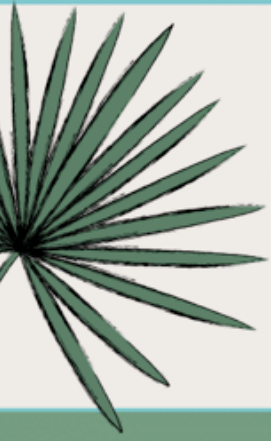
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All 2021 donors will receive
a commemorative pin
(design above).

The Florida Master Naturalist Program was created with a vision to inform, prepare and empower individuals to strengthen the conservation ethic of the people of Florida. To celebrate our accomplishments and secure the future of FMNP, we are aiming to grow our endowment! Your gift helps train more Master Naturalists, develop curriculum resources and protect natural Florida through education.

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