

year in review
2009

inside



Snakes alive!

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Florida State Director Jeff Danter with E.O. Wilson.

Personal Reflections on a Hero, Dr. E.O. Wilson

Old habits die hard. He's invited me to call him Ed, but "Dr. Wilson" usually comes out instead. I've been in awe of the man's brilliant conservation legacy since I was a kid.

We met when I was a graduate student at the Ohio State University and the renowned Dr. E.O. Wilson gave a talk. Later, he visited the Red Hills of Alabama while I was the Conservancy's state director there, hoping to buy land in the region. We shared a field trip, and he agreed to do some Conservancy speaking engagements.

Here's a scientist of worldwide acclaim. He won two Pulitzer Prizes and innumerable other awards during his professional career at Harvard, founded entire fields of science and is a best-selling author. Yet he's one of the most humble, approachable people I've ever met and remains a true Southern gentleman in the best sense of the term.

So when I considered becoming Florida's state director, I gave Dr. Wilson—er, Ed—a call. It turns out that this Alabama native spent time during his boyhood years exploring the Florida Panhandle. He asked me to focus on the Panhandle's globally significant biological diversity in my new role, and suggested there is a huge opportunity for meaningful work.

Later, when the Florida Chapter science staff set statewide priorities, Dr. Wilson's suggestion was confirmed. We envisioned setting up an E.O.

Wilson North Florida Fund to support the Conservancy's work. At Ed's 80th birthday party, co-hosted by the Conservancy and the Harvard Club last summer in Tallahassee, he enthusiastically agreed.

We couldn't dream of a better namesake. Dr. Wilson has dedicated himself to bringing great scientific underpinnings to conservation. He clearly communicates the importance of protecting biological diversity, inspiring passion in others. If you're unfamiliar with his books, I suggest [The Diversity of Life](#) or [The Future of Life](#) to start.

In the field, entomologists like Dr. Wilson sit on the ground and barely move while I run around looking for a dramatic bird, gorgeous fish or elusive mammal. After one field day with his team I asked hopefully: "Did you find anything interesting?" Deadly serious, the ant scientists responded "Oh, just a few small things."

Isn't that what nature is all about? All those small things add up to a spectacular world. I hope you'll be inspired to join our efforts through the E.O. Wilson Fund. Please read pages 6-7 to learn more.

Jeff Danter
Florida State Director

Knock on Wood with Forrest the Red-cockaded Woodpecker

Hi. If we've not met, let me introduce myself. I'm Forrest, an endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, speaking to you from the longleaf pines of The Disney Wilderness Preserve. I was one of 10 pioneers brought here in October of 2007 when Conservancy scientists determined their recently restored habitat could once again support birds like me.

It's been quite a trip, I tell ya.

Ten more young birds from the Apalachicola National Forest joined the original group one year ago, including the beautiful Lily—who chose me as her mate (be still, my heart!) Together we starred in an online reality series, Knock on Wood, a red-cockaded carpet that flew us into the national limelight.

Nesting season '09 was brutal! First, a long drought resulted in too few bugs. Then vicious electrical storms brought heavy rains that made it hard to gather food and kept a few of the hatchlings wet and cold. Our neighbors' nest cavity tree took a direct lightning hit—glad it was empty, because any eggs in there would have fried.

Lily and I worked hard and laid two nests, but had no hatchlings. Wait 'til next year! Practice makes perfect.

A Season 1 couple, George and Gracie, produced the first nest of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to hatch in this neck of the woods since the 1960s. We believe their chick Uno fledged, although she disappeared shortly afterward. Altogether there were six breeding pairs this year. Four pairs produced at least one nest of eggs, with a total of seven hatchlings. What an achievement!

At last count, 15 of the original 20 birds remain on the preserve (way above average for relocation programs) and in late '09, six new young'ins should join our cast from Fort Stewart, Georgia. Season 2's lone bachelor, Desperado, is frantically preparing his territory to attract a mate. I may need to take the boy under my wing.

The Conservancy considers our program most promising, and eagerly anticipates Season 3. Starting in early April, we'll go live online each week at nature.org/knockonwood. You'll see photos of our eggs, and maybe even videos of chicks hatching or being banded. Surviving chicks would be the first native settlers here in generations. Wow.

We hope you join Lily and me online this spring, and help us Knock on Wood.



Catch up with Forrest, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker at nature.org/florida09.

The Conservancy has been protecting Florida lands for almost half a century—more than 1.2 million acres in all. While economic challenges made financing projects difficult this year, more than 11,000 carefully selected acres were saved. Conservation's future was jeopardized however, due to the state's inability to fund Florida Forever for the first time in 19 years.

The acquisition of **Hatchineha Ranch**—a 5,134-acre property near Kissimmee that was purchased just as the '08 *Year in Review* went to press—generated tremendous excitement throughout the conservation community. Part of the headwaters of the Greater Everglades ecosystem, Hatchineha Ranch helps to complete an exciting wildlife corridor for species such as the Florida panther. It's hailed as one of the state's timeliest and most creative conservation projects.

The property's drained wetlands used to be vital to south Florida water issues, and the Conservancy is establishing mitigation and conservation banks to provide it with proper restoration and management. This will include the removal of non-native, invasive species, application of controlled burns, ditch restoration and scientific monitoring.

Other recent significant purchases and assists include the following.

- The U.S. Forest Service's top-priority inholding, totaling 1,379 acres, was purchased within the **Apalachicola National Forest**, one of the largest contiguous blocks of public land east of the Mississippi River.
- Florida Scrub-Jay habitat—already platted for development—was purchased and donated to the **Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve** in Levy County. Expanding the reserve with 125 acres of relict sand dunes, flatwoods and marsh, it supports rare species including Eastern indigo snake and gopher tortoise.
- Alachua County was assisted in the protection of **Barr Hammock** parcels totaling 3,274 acres. Bordered by the regionally significant Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, the secluded tracts connect two large wet prairies and are important habitat for species such as the Sandhill Crane.
- Roseate Spoonbills and endangered Snail Kites feed alongside the American crocodile on 1,200 **South Dade Wetlands** acres negotiated for Miami-Dade County. Helping complete the last natural connection between the Everglades and Florida's coastal reefs, this area is critical to the protection of Biscayne Bay.

Because land management is costly, the Conservancy often transfers protected properties—usually to a state or federal agency—in a way that ensures the land stays protected. Recovered funds can then be used to protect other properties. **This year the Conservancy sold significant parcels to the state.**

- Several vital inholdings and tracts totaling 3,195 acres were added to **Blackwater River State Forest**, part of a complex of lands that is among the world's largest remaining longleaf pine forests. Priority rivers and creeks flow through this huge Florida landscape that connects Alabama to the Gulf of Mexico. It is home to the Florida black bear and migratory bird species such as the Mississippi Kite.
- Located near the headwaters of the St. Marks River, the 1,063-acre **Wood Sink** tract is now managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. In a rare natural phenomenon, a sink hole collects water that typically flows directly into the Floridan aquifer—it's a window into the remarkable drinking-water resource beneath our feet.



land protection



northern everglades

Lightsey Ranch © Carlton Ward Jr.

\$70 million to \$80 million designated for florida wetlands restoration

The Conservancy has been working with the Florida ranching community for years, visiting landowners and informing them about conservation options.

Conservancy Ranchlands Initiative Manager John Winfree noted “an alignment of the stars” recently when an interest in conservation easements exploded—especially in Northern Everglades ranchlands, where there is a great need for wetland restoration on private land.

Winfree advises on a vital federal Farm Bill program that offers landowners a perpetual easement on farm or ranch wetlands that have been previously impacted for agriculture. The program purchases conservation easements from landowners and then conducts wetland restoration. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

More than 50 applications were submitted in Florida for 2009. About a dozen have been funded so far, bringing between \$70 million and \$80 million to Florida—the largest WRP user in the nation.

Often teaming with water management district representatives on landowner visits, Winfree has facilitated successful applications and guided landowners through the application process if requested. The NRCS has offered accolades to the Conservancy for its effective outreach. Now there’s a good use of a dollar!

To learn more about wetland restoration at Hatchineha Ranch, visit nature.org/florida09.

saltwater solutions



Florida Keys © Nancy Sefton

Between the Land and Sea

It comes down to a visibility problem, literally and figuratively. Around the world, coral reefs have been bleaching and dying at accelerating rates—largely because of rising sea temperatures attributed to climate change—but most of the headlines feature melting sheet ice instead of bleached brain coral, and polar bears instead of parrotfish.

It's easy to see why reefs haven't gotten much press. Unless people snorkel or dive, what's happening to reefs is largely invisible and, until recently, happening silently as well. Fortunately, The Nature Conservancy works around the world from Florida to Australia, and from Indonesia to the Caribbean to protect reefs—the colorful heart of the world's seas—and help them adapt to the challenges of the climate change, overuse and pollution.



© Hal Brindley.com

Stimulating Coral Restoration

The whole thing started with a question: Could staghorn coral, once an abundant reef builder in Florida and the Caribbean, be propagated in underwater nurseries and used to restore reefs damaged by bleaching, hurricanes and disease?

The answer, as it turns out, was yes and an experiment that began as a curious schoolgirl's 4H project ultimately launched a new chapter in coral reef restoration.

Excited by the possibilities, the Conservancy joined the project in 2004 and helped establish four new underwater nurseries between the Dry Tortugas and Fort Lauderdale. The five-year effort to restore the corals has been so successful that in 2009, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration awarded the Conservancy and its partners a grant of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

Over the next three years, the grant will:

- fund all or part of 57 partner positions needed to develop large-scale, in-water coral nurseries
- expand four existing in-water nurseries and establish two new ones off the coast of Florida
- grow roughly 12,000 corals in Florida to enhance coral populations at 34 degraded reefs from the Dry Tortugas through Broward County
- help export coral restoration to the Caribbean by establishing two additional nurseries in the U.S. Virgin Islands

To find out more about the Conservancy's work to protect Florida's coral reefs, go online to nature.org/florida09.



Bleached coral © Erich Bartels

From Australia to Hawaii to Florida and Back

The successful Florida Reef Resilience Program, now in its fifth year, benefits directly from the Conservancy's global marine perspective. In fact, the resilience program is modeled on similar work pioneered in Australia and Hawaii.

Using scientific survey methods, scientist scuba divers randomly sample the reef from the Dry Tortugas to the St. Lucie Inlet in an effort to determine, among other things, which reefs are bleaching and which ones resist bleaching.

Identifying, studying and protecting resilient reefs is currently one of the best hedges against damage caused by climate change. It's a key strategy being carried out along coral reefs all over the world and the Florida Reef Resilience Program is an important part of that work.

Sea grass—The Green Machine

Florida's Gulf Coast areas harbor some of the most extensive sea-grass beds on the planet—well over 1 million acres. Sea grass provides for a wide variety of marine animals. But a number of factors damage this habitat, and once impacted it is notoriously difficult to restore. The Conservancy is implementing innovative restoration techniques in St. Martins Marsh in the Big Bend and in the Big Lagoon near Pensacola. Community outreach and education is also offered to prevent future damage to these "prairies of the sea."

Turtle Patrol at Blowing Rocks

Each year, hundreds of globally endangered sea turtles return to lay their eggs in nests of sand at the Conservancy's Blowing Rocks Preserve. In October, Conservancy staff completed several months of early morning Turtle Patrols to search for nestlings and adults trapped along the shore. The season ended with only one stranded adult loggerhead on the far south end of the beach. With assistance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and two Jupiter Island police officers, the turtle was successfully freed from the rocks and returned to sea.

Oysters—More than just an Appetizer

Oyster reefs are perhaps the most imperiled marine habitat in the world. Yet we count on Florida's reefs to provide important "ecological services" such as water filtration; food and refuge for other species; and keeping our shorelines stable. The Conservancy works in several places around the state to restore damaged oyster reefs—including the acclaimed restoration effort in Volusia County's Mosquito Lagoon.

Florida Reef Resilience Program Partners

EcoAdapt
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Florida Institute of Technology
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Monroe County Commercial Fishermen's Association
Mote Marine Laboratory
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Nova Southeastern University
Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative
The Nature Conservancy
University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
University of South Florida
U.S. National Park Service

Climate Change & the Future of the Keys

For a report that raised eyebrows across South Florida, the title was deceptively bland, *Initial Estimates of the Ecological and Economic Consequences of Sea Level Rise on the Florida Keys through the year 2100*.

Still, if the title was prosaic, the contents were anything but. Bottomline: even a seven-inch rise in sea level would submerge much of Big Pine Key by 2100. Extrapolated across the Keys, that same seven-inch rise translates to catastrophic changes in habitat and approximately \$11 billion in lost property value.

News of the report, led by Conservancy scientist Chris Bergh, appeared in outlets from Miami to Key West and now the Monroe County Commission is expected to join a Climate Change Compact with Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

The results of this report add to the weight of science as the Conservancy works with an increasing number of global partners to address the root causes of climate change.



© Anne Birch

The Earth's foremost naturalist didn't have to ask the Conservancy twice to protect north Florida's natural bounty. Our response is being funded through the E.O. Wilson North Florida Fund.

North Florida, widely considered one of the country's six biodiversity hotspots, stretches 350 miles from a western boundary along the pristine Perdido River to the Atlantic Ocean. Dipping southward into Ocala-Wekiva forests, it hosts a stunning number of rare species within four primary habitats. All provide Florida's human communities with critical ecosystem services.

"All gifts to the E.O. Wilson Fund are invested into vital but seriously threatened north Florida natural areas," says John Robert Middlemas of the Florida Chapter's Board of Trustees. "Because the region is less developed and land comes with a lower price tag, the Conservancy can make rapid progress here."



Fern Hammock Spring © Lou Ley, FDEP

Freshwater springs dot north Florida along with underwater caves, karsts and aquifer recharge areas. At least 30 first-magnitude springs like the ones near Ocala each discharge many millions of gallons of water daily, more than any other state or any nation in the world.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker © T. Engstrom

Longleaf pine forests are huge and contiguous in north Florida—Black-water River State Forest is said to be one of the largest tracts remaining in the world. These magnificent forests, hosting 300 known species of birds and 2,500 plant species, once carpeted the Southeast. Today, less than three percent of the ancient forests remain.



Oyster reef restoration mats © Michelle Peters-Snyder

Coastal water settings host some of the Conservancy's most innovative programs such as oyster reef research in Duval County, sea level rise studies along the Gulf, and the protection of internationally significant sea-grass beds along the Big Bend.



Betty and Crawford Rainwater Perdido River Nature Preserve © Beth Maynor Young

Rivers like the Apalachicola and Suwannee brim with imperiled species and connect upland habitats with the Gulf of Mexico. The majority of "Outstanding Florida Waters" flow here, begging for proactive conservation while remaining relatively unspoiled.

north florida:

a hotspot of
biological diversity



“The Conservancy’s science-based action plan will result in giant blocks of forestland remaining healthy and intact,” says Doug Shaw, director of science & conservation strategies.

“These forests directly benefit Florida’s rivers and coasts, where the Conservancy also leads successful programs to support habitat for species such as the Florida manatee and Okaloosa darter.”



Apalachicola bay © Eric Blackmore



Key Species

Red-cockaded Woodpecker
Swallow-tailed Kite
Florida black bear
Florida manatee
Okaloosa darter
Freshwater mussels
Gulf sturgeon
Gopher tortoise
Indigo snake
Flatwoods salamander
White-topped pitcher plant
Panhandle lily

Threats

Forest fragmentation
Increasing development
Sea level rise
Loss of river and spring connectivity
Water quality degradation
Suppression of nature’s fire regime

Partners

Solid partnerships demonstrate how north Florida’s economy, military, sporting and tourist industries all benefit from conservation. And, natural areas are managed more efficiently when partners share equipment, staff, knowledge and expertise.

Nine major public and private partners joined the Conservancy’s Gulf Coast Plain Ecosystem Partnership. Together they own and manage more than 1 million acres and have aided the recovery of rare species such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The Conservancy also collaborates with universities; city, county, state and federal agencies; and other non-governmental conservation groups.

The United States military and The Nature Conservancy might seem like strange bedfellows, but they share common goals. The Conservancy recently partnered with Enterprise Florida's Office of Tourism Trade and Economic Development to analyze natural areas in 10-mile zones surrounding 10 of Florida's defense installations. The task: to identify opportunities that would help sustain military missions by buffering the bases with conservation land.

Florida's military bases once existed in natural areas far from cities and residential communities. Some are huge; Eglin Air Force Base alone spans 724 square miles of land. But growing human populations and changing land uses have led to complaints from neighbors about noise, dust and smoke that can force costly military mission adjustments. And, a large number of rare and endangered species are sometimes forced onto these installations where their presence might restrict operations.

Recognizing this, the 2006 Florida Legislature amended the Florida Forever program to encourage the protection of natural areas that also buffer military bases. This resulted in an urgent need to identify priority tracts, and the Conservancy took on the challenge.

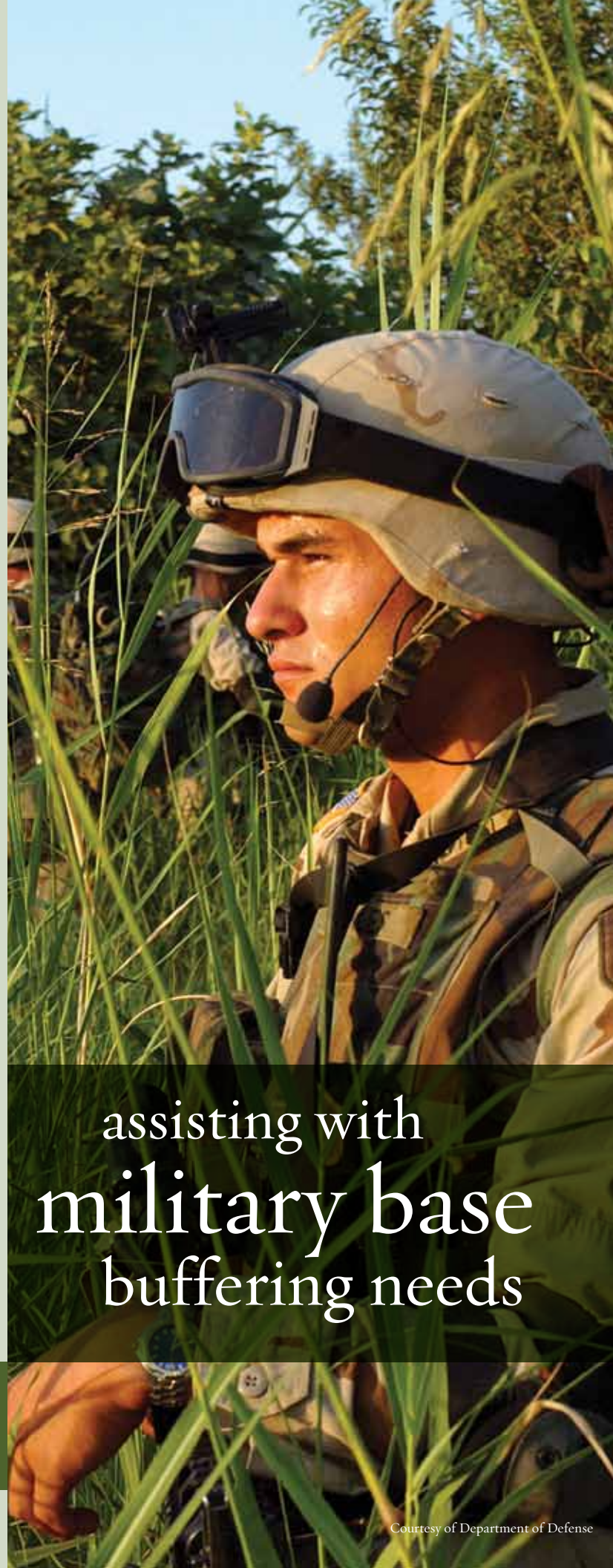
The Conservancy recognized 63 sites as "Areas of Conservation Significance," ranking them within each military zone and assigning statewide priority. Conservation areas and active Florida Forever projects near installations were identified, and researchers kept rare species and habitats, linkages and wildlife corridors, and forest and water issues in mind. All was viewed through the Conservancy's nearly 50 years of experience with local land owners.

"Florida's defense community enthusiastically welcomed the blueprint for conservation action that we created," said the Conservancy's Deborah Keller. "It showed a strong need for the continuation of programs such as Florida Forever and the federal Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative."

Meanwhile, the Department of Defense Legacy Program awarded the Conservancy a grant to create Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas partnerships. These will reduce invasive, non-native species on four Florida bases and surrounding lands.

Identifying, protecting and managing priority landscapes—it's a solution that serves us all well.

Visit us online at [nature.org/florida09](https://www.nature.org/florida09) to learn more about how the Conservancy works with the military.



assisting with
military base
buffering needs

snakes alive!



Eastern indigo snake © Dirk J. Stevenson

Project Orianne Delivers \$200,000 to Protect Endangered Indigo Snake Habitat

Snakes alive! At Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve, the Conservancy has joined forces with a private foundation to restore native snake habitat. The Conservancy and its partner, Project Orianne—the Indigo Snake Initiative, hope to eventually reintroduce indigo snakes to this northwest Florida area where they are thought to have been locally extinct for 20 years.

Why protect the indigo snake? It's a charmer:

- This federally listed endangered species is the nation's largest native snake.
- An important part of Florida's diversity, it specializes in eating other snakes.
- Indigos are beautiful, graceful and harmless to humans.

The Conservancy received a \$200,000 grant from Project Orianne in 2009 to expand work begun by the two groups in 2008. The Conservancy is restoring sandhill habitat—the indigo's preferred territory—surrounding steephead ravines at nearby Torreya State

Park's Sweetwater Tract. This will also help keep those globally rare ravines intact.

“Our goals are the same,” says the Conservancy's David Printiss of his partners at Project Orianne. “Indigo snakes need lots of territory, and the Conservancy has been perfecting methods to restore sandhill habitat and manage large tracts of land.”

Prescribed fire is vital to these native habitats, and the Conservancy and Project Orianne recently signed a memorandum of understanding that allows them to assist one another with fire activities at a moment's notice. Project Orianne also works with The Nature Conservancy in Georgia and Alabama, and this regional agreement extends the groups' mutual, can-do approach.

Reintroduction of the indigo snake will be considered in four to six years, after the project is thoroughly backed up with solid science. Questions remain about the snake and how—or if—it can best be reestablished. Together, the Conservancy and Project Orianne will dig for the answers.

Four former Florida governors joined The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Forever Coalition this year in an effort to restore funding to the Florida Forever land-buying program. Funding was not included in this year's budget for the first time in Florida's 19-year history of conservation spending through Florida Forever and Preservation 2000, first launched in 1990 under Governor Bob Martinez. The programs are responsible for preserving more than 2 million acres. Another 2 million acres are currently identified as necessary to complete Florida's green infrastructure.

Governors Martinez, Bob Graham, Jeb Bush and Reuben Askew are serving as honorary co-chairs of the effort to convince the 2010 Florida Legislature to allocate \$15 million to enable the issuance of \$300 million in Florida Forever bonds. The annual \$300 million has been used by various agencies to protect waterways, wildlife habitat and recreational sites deemed essential for Florida's future.

Funding for Florida Forever was eliminated in the fiscal year that began July 1, 2009, an interruption that undermines conservation projects in the pipeline at both the state and local level to create parks and protect other natural treasures.

The dollar impact that conservation lands have on Florida's economy was documented by the Conservancy just before the start of this year's legislative session in *Economic Benefits of Land Conservation: a Case for Florida Forever*. Tourism is a \$65 billion annual industry in Florida, with nature-based activities enjoyed by 65 percent of the 80 million people who visited the state in 2007. The Conservancy's 28-page report assembled a variety of facts about Florida's natural treasures. For example: Florida's 1,350 miles of coastal resources were estimated to provide, on average, more than \$11 billion a year in storm protection services.

A second report released in October describes Florida Forever successes around the state and what is left to acquire, focusing in on specific counties. This *Florida Green Book* will be used by the governors and the Florida Forever Coalition to make a case for continued funding.



Former Governor Bob Martinez speaks at press conference in Tampa.

florida forever draws bipartisan support



Black bear © Mark Conlin

Letting Bears Lead the Way

A Web story describing how the Conservancy uses text messages from collared black bears to determine tracts of land most in need of protection sparked national media attention. Scientists at the universities of Kentucky and Florida provided information used by the Conservancy and local land managers to help create functional wildlife corridors for long-ranging mammals.

Striped Bass and Alabama Shad Return to Historic Spawning Habitat

Migratory fish are able to reach hundreds of miles of previously inaccessible spawning habitat because of the Conservancy's work on Florida's Apalachicola River. The Army Corps of Engineers agreed to systematically open the locks at Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam for fish passage. The project's success is being replicated at two Corps facilities on the Alabama River in Alabama.

Jay Watch Provides Important Scrub Habitat Management Data

Florida Scrub-Jays are an "indicator species" for Florida scrub habitat, and the Conservancy's citizen-scientist Jay Watch program provides population and habitat information used by Florida's park service, water management districts and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to maintain high quality habitat. In 2009 more than 61 sites were monitored by more than 200 volunteers in 16 counties. A full report is available each January.

Florida Fire Team Continues Record-breaking Pace

In 2009 the Conservancy's Florida Fire Team participated in almost 10 percent of all ecological fires in Florida. Breaking last year's record, the team helped maintain fire-dependent habitats for native species on more than 90,000 acres. Fire crews performed controlled burns on Conservancy preserves and also assisted federal, state and local partners on public lands. Conservancy staff helped train more than 350 students.

Disney Movie EARTH provides \$2.7 million for the Atlantic Forest

The Conservancy was the beneficiary of Walt Disney Studios and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund's "Buy a Ticket. Plant a Tree" promotion. For each person who attended the opening weekend of EARTH, Disney Nature's spectacular movie about the journey of three wild, elusive animal families, Disney contributed \$1 to the Conservancy's Plant a Billion Trees campaign. This generated \$2.7 million to plant trees in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil.

Preventing Animal Invasions

Burmese pythons, Nile monitor lizards and a variety of other highly invasive, non-native animals are disrupting Florida's natural systems at an alarming rate. The Conservancy is working on both the state and federal level on legislation to identify and prevent the introduction and establishment of the riskiest species.

Carbon Counting Project Launched at Preserve

The Conservancy's 12,000-acre Disney Wilderness Preserve near Orlando will serve as a laboratory over the next several years to measure how much carbon is stored in mature flatwood forests compared to improved pasture. Sensitive instruments secured to a tower reaching above the trees will collect weather, water, energy and carbon data through a partnership with the University of Central Florida.

Invasive Plant Predicting Tool Approved

Whether plants proposed as biofuel crops will become invasive in Florida's native habitats has been a concern. The Conservancy worked with the University of Florida to adopt a predictive tool to assess future plant behavior. This decision is critical because the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services' biofuel rule stipulates that special permits and a bond for clean-up are required when species are determined likely to be invasive by UF.



Miscanthus © Pat Schmitz



“I grew up in the woods and loved being there. It’s so important to spend time that way—just being outdoors. Later

in life I spent a lot of my free time visiting and exploring state parks. Now, I am lucky enough to have the means to give back to what I believe in.”

Andy Barnes

Florida Board of Trustees Chairman Andy Barnes grew up on his father’s Connecticut farm. His fond memories there include many impromptu moments spent outdoors—tracking a red fox in the snow, strolling along a nearby river—moments that eventually became a life-long passion and commitment to nature.

Andy, a Harvard graduate, worked in Rhode Island and Washington, D.C. prior to moving to Florida, where he quickly advanced to the post of publisher at the St. Petersburg Times.

Combining his love of nature and aptitude for leadership, Andy began his service as a Florida trustee in 2005. Shortly thereafter, he assumed the role of chairman and prompted several ambitious philanthropic efforts. He and his wife, Molly, included the Conservancy in their wills; encouraged fellow board members to also join the Legacy Club; and donated a substantial gift toward the Conservancy’s global climate change initiative. Most recently, the Barnes, with other board members, spearheaded the Conservancy’s Colombia Challenge through charitable support of our global work.

Now, Andy and Molly are retired but they volunteer, travel, pursue creative endeavors, and host extended family gatherings at their expansive ranch near Dade City. Andy is stepping down from his chairmanship in November, but he leaves us with a truly inspirational legacy of leadership and dedication.

The Nature Conservancy in Florida is honored to recognize the following donors whose contributions have supported our work during the last fiscal year (July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009). All of the donors listed have ties to Florida, though in some cases their donations went to support Conservancy projects in other parts of the world. We deeply appreciate every gift and regret that space constraints prevent us from listing all of our donors. Thank you for your support of the Conservancy’s work.

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Disney's Friends for Change supports the Conservancy's Meili Snow Mountain project in China

China's Meili Snow Mountain Range is a sacred and beautiful landscape with major ecological value; its forests are vital for endangered snow leopards and clouded leopards, Asiatic black bears, and red pandas. While rich in natural resources, this remote area is one of the poorest in China and lacks basic necessities like roads, clean water and waste removal services.

Tourism brings much-needed revenue to the community, but without proper planning and infrastructure, it also has the potential to destroy the pristine landscape and natural beauty that draws people there. The area is approved to be a National Park, but before it can open the existing waste must be removed and an ongoing process for waste removal and safe disposal must be developed. With the help of Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green, the Conservancy will protect the region's rare wildlife by working with community volunteers to establish a system that will keep it clean and promote eco-friendly tourism.



Red panda

Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green is committed to the environment by inspiring kids to help the planet. Through the program, kids can learn practical ways to help the environment, get their friends involved, track their collective impact and have the opportunity to help Disney decide how \$1 million in donations to various environmental projects will be made over the course of a year. Funding amounts to each organization selected is determined through voting on Disney's Friends for Change.

Please vote at www.Disney.com/projectgreen.



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

To support the Conservancy's work in Florida, use the enclosed envelope or make a gift online at
nature.org/florida09