



Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 16 Number 4

Winter 2010

Lack of Rains Means Less Winter Wildlife



Reddish Egret
Photo by Joel Reynolds

Merritt Island NWR has experienced a lack of rainfall throughout the year leading to severe drought conditions. Despite the active hurricane season, the refuge hasn't received rainfall from tropical systems that often provide late season water to fill the impoundments. Additionally, the lagoon water levels which normally peak in October did not rise as high as in past years and have begun dropping down to dry season levels.

Waterfowl food production within the refuge impoundments is dependent upon the timing and abundance of rainfall. The submerged aquatic vegetation, the primary food available to waterfowl at Merritt Island NWR, is dependent on low salinity conditions. Due to the lack of rainfall and high salinity, production of submerged aquatic vegetation on the refuge is very limited.

Many impoundments which wildlife have depended upon in the past have become hyper-saline as water has evaporated and not been replaced by rain. These conditions have led us to open the impoundments to the lagoon to allow the salt to flush out. This temporarily limits habitat availability but prevents long term damage to the vegetation.

Most impoundments are currently more conducive for shorebirds than waterfowl and waders. The high salinity and low water levels have been favorable for reddish egrets and many can be seen where you would normally be watching ducks. The one bright spot are the marshes along the road to Playalinda Beach which are holding a diverse assortment of waterfowl and a large number of coots.

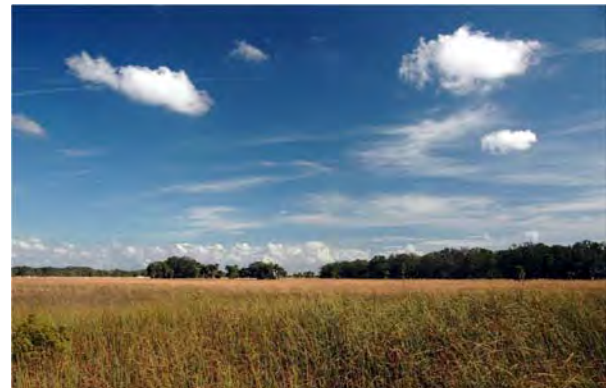
Stan Howarter, Refuge Biologist

New Florida Refuge to be Proposed in January!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working in partnership with Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments; private landowners; ranchers; non-governmental conservation organizations; and other stakeholders to protect, restore, and conserve ~150,000 acres of environmentally important natural habitat and associated wildlife in Florida, including 88 Federally- or State-listed species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The proposal includes not only a traditional national wildlife refuge, but also an associated conservation area that could include conservation easements on active ranching lands. The study area includes Polk, Osceola, Indian River, Okeechobee, and Highland counties. Still largely rural, this area is one of the great grassland and savanna landscapes of eastern North America, containing a mosaic of seasonally wet grasslands, longleaf pine savannas, and cattle ranches that sustains one of the most important assemblages of imperiled vertebrate wildlife in the southeast U.S. and a large portion of the unprotected natural habitat remaining in peninsular Florida.

For more information and to see a map of the study area for this project, please visit this project under Current Land Acquisition Projects at: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning/>. Starting in January, comments may be submitted at one of the public scoping meetings that will be scheduled in January and February 2011; by email to EvergladesHeadwatersProposal@fws.gov by fax to 321.861.1276; and/or by mail to Proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, PO Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781-2683. If you would like to be kept up to date on this project and included on the mailing list for this project, please email us at EvergladesHeadwatersProposal@fws.gov or mail us at PO Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781-2683 and include your name, title and agency or organization represented (if applicable), mailing address, and email address. Please note: Federal government mailing lists are subject to the Freedom of Information Act of 1974, which can require the release of these lists to the public, upon request. We appreciate your interest in this proposed refuge

Cheri M Ehrhardt, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, USFWS



Proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area
Photo by George Willson

President's Message

Greetings from Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to our Friends Group MIWA, the largest friends group in the nation. Great news – despite the drought and warm weather, the migratory species (human and other wildlife) are slowly returning. The weather is also cooling down and it is certainly welcome to us “year-rounders”.

Between our guest speaker Kevin Karlson, our silent auction and a wonderful dinner put on by Bill Moore of Delaware North at the Debus Center, our annual meeting was a great success. Particulars will follow. Let it be known that the dinner was superb, the speaker was one of the best we have ever had and to top it all off, we MADE MONEY. In addition, three new board members were nominated and later installed. They are: Captain John Turcott, a local fishing guide; Jim Tulley, the mayor of Titusville; and Diane Stees, a NASA employee who returns to the board after an 8 year hiatus. Welcome all.

Currently there are several programs that you may be interested in at Merritt Island. These include several fundraising eco tours for 2011. There is also a beautiful wildlife Art Exhibition at the VIC. This display was initiated and organized by board member, Darleen Hunt. In addition, the annual Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, December 20th.

In closing, I would like to remind all that by purchasing a Duck Stamp you are Supporting land acquisition projects for the US Fish and Wildlife System. The stamp cost is \$15 and remember, 99 cents on each dollar goes directly into land purchases.

For now, come see us on the refuge. Best wishes to you and your family in 2011 and thanks for all you do for MIWA and the Refuge.

Jim Pedersen, MIWA President



The purpose of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.

President	Jim Pedersen
Vice President	Dan Click
Treasurer	Jim Butts
Secretary	John Tribe
President Emeritus	George English

Board Members

Sam Beddingfield, Warren Camp, James Clark, Chris Fairey, Darleen Hunt, Robert Hutchison, Dan LeBlanc, Forrest McCartney, Truman Scarborough, Lee Solid, Ned Steel, Diane Stees, Laurilee Thompson, Jim Tully, John Turcot and Charlie Venuto

Refuge Manager Layne Hamilton **USFWS Liaison** Dorn Whitmore
NASA Liaison Mario Busacca

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) is a nonprofit, cooperating association for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The *Habi-Chat* is published quarterly. For MIWA information, call **321-861-2377**.

Newsletter Editor Carol Pedersen **Technical Consultant** Cheri Ehrhardt

Habi-Chat **Committee** Cheri Ehrhardt, Sandee Larsen, Carol Pedersen, and Dorn Whitmore

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THE MERRITT ISLAND WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION (REGISTRATION #CH29759) HAS COMPLIED WITH THE REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS OF CHAPTER 496, FLORIDA STATUTES, SOLICITATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS ACT. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

International Coastal Cleanup 2010

On September 18, 2010 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge staff and 81 volunteers took to the shores of Haulover Canal to participate in the 25th annual International Coastal cleanup. The worldwide cleanup event is acknowledged in over 108 countries and last year alone over 7.4 million pounds of trash was collected off the banks of countless waterways.

Volunteers bravely battled the Florida heat and mosquitoes for 4 hours to collect 1,050 lbs of debris littered on our beautiful shores. According to the 2009 report given by the Ocean Conservancy, the largest source of debris came from shoreline and recreational activities (over 60% of all debris collected). Merritt Island proved to have similar statistics with over 67% of debris related to recreational activities.

Some of the more interesting findings collected that afternoon included: a bowling ball, an old fishing rod and enough clothing items to create the perfect outfit! Thanks again to **Nancy Corona** for coordinating this wonderful event. We are so thankful for the help from the **Orlando Kayak Club, Astronaut Environmental Club, Boy Scouts Troup 370, Bill Nunn, Charles Mitchell, Patricia Thomas-Arnold, Curt Arnold, Keith Nidy, Doris Franklin, Kathie Benson, Amanda Hoffmeyer, Stacey Shriner, Joanne Dykes, Marcia Dykes, Sally and Robert Hutchinson, Pat Barden, Joe and Ching McCulligan, Harold and Nancy Brock, and all of the community members** who came out. We could not have done it without all of you!

Stacey Shriner, Public Use Intern



*Coastal Clean Up Volunteer Crew
File Photo*



MIWA Member Donates in a “BIG” Way!

MIWA Member, Robert Hice Jr. does things in a big way. A long time annual visitor from Georgia, he noticed the Refuge VIC bird feeders in poor condition. We explained that raccoons had been tearing up the wooden feeders which, if continued, would result in halting the feeding of our seasonal wild birds. Our most popular species, the Painted Bunting, were frequent feeders and would be sorely missed. He guaranteed he could build us a “raccoon proof” feeder.

Well, that he did. Unfortunately, the hand made feeder was much larger than we could have imagined! It was approximately 4 feet tall by 4 feet wide. There was a method to his madness. The center column was wide to prevent raccoons from climbing into the feeder and the top was wide for “platform feeding”. After much discussion, we sat and waited to see if it worked. And, sure enough, not one raccoon has made it to the bird seed. Robert, and his little wiener dog Ginger, also dropped off numerous bags of bird seed, peanut butter, bread, and three handmade Barred Owl nesting boxes. Hopefully we can find a spot on the Refuge that will benefit from the nesting boxes.

Robert is back at his trout farm, the Rainbow Ranch Inc in Cumming Ga., with *Gingerell- Smelly Belly- Power Foot- Loves Boo- Whistle Britches* his faithful eight year old pup. Thank you, Robert, for an entertaining visit- one we talked about for weeks!



Robert with Ginger, MIWA’s only canine member!

Photo by Sandee Larsen

Please be aware that all donations are appreciated, but items must be preapproved via refuge officials before accepted. If you are interested in making a donation such as Robert’s you must contact a Ranger and send a photo and size specifics prior to delivery. Please call and ask for the Public Use Department at 321-861-0667.

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager

MIWA Annual Meeting

Approximately 140 members and Refuge staff attended the 2010 MIWA Annual Meeting held on October 13th, 2010 at the Debus Conference Center. The evening was a busy one, with MIWA President, Jim Pedersen, acting as master of ceremonies for the event. The Brevard Zoo came with a few critters, a silent auction was held (winners & donators listed on pages 5-7), and dinner for the group was served. It wasn't all fun and games, with a business report, membership update, and Refuge report on the agenda. Here is a brief list of the evening's program:

MIWA Board Member & Nomination Committee Chair, Darleen Hunt, nominated members to serve the upcoming year. Current board members whose terms expired this year have agreed to serve for another two-year term are: Sam Beddingfield, Dr. James Clark, Darleen Hunt, Robert Hutchison, Truman Scarborough, Lee Solid, Ned Steel and Laurilee Thompson. New board Members nominated are: Captain John Turcot, Diane Stees and Jim Tulley. Officers nominated are: Jim Pedersen- President, Dan Click-Vice President, John Tribe-Secretary, and Jim Butts-Treasurer. Darleen called for additional nominations from the floor, and none were presented.

A vote was taken and all board member and officer nominations were approved unanimously. Officers will be voted in at the November MIWA Board meeting.

Refuge Manager, Layne Hamilton welcomed members and thanked our awesome volunteers for their hard work and ongoing efforts at the MINWR. She voiced her appreciation for MIWA and looks forward to another great year of partnership with our group.

Refuge Biologist, Mike Legare, gave an update on Refuge happenings this past year. He included slides of the cold stunned sea turtle rescue and the progress of a refuge project that renews impoundment areas to natural marsh lands.

The highlight of the evening (besides the delicious dinner) was the keynote speaker, **Kevin Karlson**. Known as the shorebird guy, not only is he an accomplished photographer, Kevin also is an author and tour leader. His program on bird migration at the refuge was outstanding. Full of fantastic photography and soothing music, it was a joy. For those of you that did not attend you missed something special!

I want to thank Bill Moore and Delaware North Parks & Resorts at KSC for sponsoring the event. Without your support the evening would not have been a success! And a big thank you to volunteers: Sandy Walters, Ed Larsen, Ned Steel, Cheryl Girard, Stacey Shriner and Amanda Hoffmeyer for setting up, welcoming the attendees, and breaking down the event. I could not do it without your help, you are the best!

Members, please consider attending next year's event. It is an enjoyable evening to share with fellow members, and a great way to meet new friends.

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager



Dorn Whitmore, Andy Bankert, Kevin Karlson and Ned Steel went birding during Kevin's stay at the MINWR. Photo by Sandee Larsen



Funds Needed for Refuge Tour Bus

MIWA needs your help! One of this year's items on the MINWR's wish list is a tour bus. A 20-24 passenger vehicle is desperately needed for public and MIWA member tours. The current refuge van seats only nine passengers comfortably and is difficult to enter and exit (ouch, you're stepping on my foot!). MIWA President, Jim Pedersen has been working with area dealerships for a good deal. We have banked funds earmarked for this purchase, but still are a little short.

Please help us achieve our goal of \$54,000. To donate funds for this project, send your check payable to MIWA, PO Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781. Mark the memo "Passenger Van". All donations are tax deductible.

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager



Help us fund a new refuge tour bus.
File photo.

Silent Auction Winners and Donators:

- Cindy Amoruso* *** Set of 4 Decals donated by **Susan Wooldridge**
Vendi-bag Handmade Purse donated by **Kiley Rose**
Hand Painted Silk Scarf donated by Artist, **Darleen Hunt**
National Parks of the World Book donated by **George English**
- Liz Bertels* *** Bird in the Bush-Original Framed Watercolor donated by Artist, **Susan Blakeslee**
Anole Artwork framed/ matted donated by Artist, **Mary Ann Theis**
Best Scenic Drives in America book donated by **George English**
- D. Bryan* *** Hummingbird Earrings donated by **Carol Pedersen**
- Kathleen Burson* *** Sling Bag- Handmade Purse donated by **Kiley Rose**
Wooden Bowl donated by **Dr. & Mrs. Jim Clark**
Set of 4 Decals donated by **Susan Wooldridge**
Florida Panther Print donated by **Brenda Harrison**
- Jim Butts* *** The Art of James Bama Book donated by **George English**
- Warren Camp* *** 1/2 Day Guided Trip For 2 donated by **Captain John Turcot of Back Country on Fly**
- Dr. Jim Clark & Family* *** Croaking Toad donated by **Jim Butts**
Mini turtle Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
2xl Adult T Shirt- Turtles donated by **Atlas Screen Printing**
Two free meals donated by **The Coffee Shop**
Mallard Duck Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
Hoot Book donated by **Amy Gottsche**
Earth From Above 3rd Edition donated by **George English**
- Diane Click* *** Youth XS T Shirt- Insects donated by **Atlas Screen Printing**
- Donna Collins* *** Anhinga Crossing Sign donated by **Atlas Screen Printing**
- Kay Cooper* *** Welcome Sign donated by **Jim Butts**
Rascal Book donated by **Amy Gottsche**
- Annette Doerr* *** Gift Bag donated by **Dixie Crossroads Restaurant**
- Danette Doeule* *** Tortoise Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
- Joanne Dykes* *** Sun Dial donated by **Jim Butts**
Fritillary on Lantana photo – framed donated by **Bill Nunn**
- Betty Eichhorn* *** 2 passes (Adult) donated by **The Brevard Zoo**
- George English* *** Little Owl framed/matted Print donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**
Copper/Sea Glass Bookmark donated by **Cyndie Olson**
Friends Plaque donated by **Jim Butts**
Hawk Photograph/print donated by Photographer, **Robert Amoruso**
- Chris Fairey* *** 2 passes (Adult) donated by **The Brevard Zoo**
- Cheryl Girard* *** Birdhouse donated by **Sandy Walters**
Hummingbird donated by **Sandy Walters**
Scrap Book Kit donated by **Dr. & Mrs. Clark**
Galapagos Tortoise Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
XL Adult t – turtles donated by **Atlas Screen Printing**
3 day/2 night stay donated by **Wakulla Suites**



Silent Auction Winners and Donators:

- Cheryl Girard* *** 18 pc. Brass Goblet Set donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**
Spoonbill Sculpture donated by **Nancy Grande**
- Jerri Hight* *** Skunk Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
Eagle Finger Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
- Jerri & Darleen Hunt* *** Skunk Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
Eagle Finger Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
Basket of Homemade Jellies donated by **Trudy Metzger**
Alligator Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
TY Pumpkin Bag donated by **Jim Butts**
- Witha Lacuesta* *** Art of Robert Bateman donated by **George English**
Wildlife The Beauty of Animals donated by **George English**
- Vince & Helga Lamb* *** Gift Certificate- Pizza Gallery & Grill donated by **Lori Holban of Craig Technologies**
October Harvest Basket donated by **Jerri & Darleen Hunt**
Gift Bag donated by **Dixie Crossroads**
- Ed Larsen* *** Pennant Autographed by Donnie Jones #5 donated by **The Miami Dolphins**
Jaguars Mini Helmet donated by **The Jacksonville Jaguars**
- Bill Lathrop* *** On L Pond Road- -Original Framed Watercolor & Ink donated by Artist, **Kathie Benson**
Palm Tree Artwork - Roseate Spoonbill donated by **Palm Tree America**
1/2 Day Fishing Trip for up to 4 anglers donated by **Capt. Neal Goodrich of Fishing Frenzy Charter Service**
- George Leath* ***
- Mike Legare* *** He Restore's My Soul-Framed Photography donated by Photographer, **Dale Nichols**
- Joyce Luther* *** Singapore- Photography on Canvas by Photographer, **Mary Ann Theis**
- Barbara Maloney* *** Black Panther Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
- Deborah Marien* *** Bob White-Quail Matted Print donated by Artist, **Ginger Donn**
Loon Framed/matted Print donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**
- Barbara McCoy* *** Bird House donated by **Sandy Walters**
Handmade Cards donated by Artist, **Betty Camp**
Handmade Cards donated by Artist, **Betty Camp**
TY Pumpkin Bag donated by **Jim Butts**
- Trudy Metzger* *** Croaking Toad donated by **Jim Butts**
- Harold Morrow* *** Gator With Turtles Print donated by **Brenda Harrison**
- Cameron Myers* *** General Admission 10 Game Pack donated by **The Brevard County Manatees**
- Lisa Myers* *** Croaking Toad donated by **Jim Butts**
Can You Find Me? Artwork framed/ matted donated by Artist, **Mary Ann Theis**
- Alicia Nichols* *** Handmade Wooden Candle Holder donated by **Dr. Jim Clark**
Friends Forever Frame donated by **Jim Butts**
- Maggie Nichols* *** Foral Arrangement donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**
Rain Barrel with Handmade Cover donated by **Susan Waldron**
- Michael O'Berry* *** Baby Onsie donated by **Carol Hansen**
- Carol Pedersen* *** Turtle Puppet donated by **Folkmanis Puppets**
Duck Planter donated by **Susan Wooldridge**
- Larry Peek* *** Framed Photography- Cardinals donated by Photographer, **Ken Wyant**



Silent Auction Winners and Donators:



<i>Leslie Peters</i>	***	Vase With Candle donated by Jim Butts Red-eyed Frog print donated by Photographer, Walter Chadwick Original Photography donated by Photographer, William Allen Baby Gators Print donated by Brenda Harrison
<i>Bill Prentiss</i>	***	Eagle Stage Puppet donated by Folkmanis Puppets
<i>Marie Ramer</i>	***	Stretched Canvas-Egret donated by Grass Shack Trading
<i>Shirley Solid</i>	***	Baby Turtle Puppet donated by Folkmanis Puppets
<i>Jill Spitzer</i>	***	Mother Tears-Framed Photography donated by Photographer Carol Hansen Carved Sea Turtle Box donated by Creative Handcrafts Mermaid Matted Print donated by Artist, Yvette Whitmore Kayak Tour for 2 donated by A Day Away Kayak Tours
<i>Diane Stees</i>	***	Bird House donated by Sandy Walters Bird House donated by Sandy Walters One Time Family Fun Pass donated by Alligator Farm Zoological Park Youth SM T Shirt- Nightlife donated by Atlas Screen Printing Youth MD T Shirt-Hammock donated by Atlas Screen Printing Scrub-jay Photo-framed/matted donated by Photographer, Bill Nunn
<i>Joyce Stefancic</i>	***	Bird Feeder donated by Ace Hardware Titusville Oriental Flower Drawing donated by Brenda Harrison Original Watercolor Print donated by Artist, Witha Lacuesta
<i>B. Stewart</i>	***	Stained Glass Sailboat donated by Jim Butts Cardinal on Nest donated by Sandy Walters 2 Friendship Passes donated by Bok Tower Gardens
<i>Sherman & Reta Tank</i>	***	One Round of Golf for Two Players donated by Harmony Golf Preserve Oak Frame donated by Jim Butts
<i>Mary Ann theis</i>	***	Youth LG t Shirt- salamander donated by Atlas Screen Printing
<i>Rose MarieTierney</i>	***	Wooden Music Box donated by Sandy Walters Watercolor Print donated by Betty Camp Original Matted Photography by Photographer, Tom Dunkerton
<i>Margaret Towe</i>	***	Healing Touch Treatment donated by Lois Speer Gift Certificate- Pizza Gallery & Grill donated by Lori Holban of Craig Technologies Community Bucks donated by Rusty's Seafood & Oyster Bar 2 Friendship Passes donated by Bok Tower Gardens 2 Passes donated by Butterfly World
<i>John Tribe</i>	***	2 One day Park Hopper Tickets donated by Walt Disney World 2 One day Park Hopper Tickets donated by Walt Disney World
<i>Charlie & Barbara Venuto</i>	***	Gift Certificate donated by Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival Western Themed Lamp donated by Joanne Napieralski
<i>Sandy Walters</i>	***	Gift Certificate donated by Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival 12 Homemade Jellies donated by Trudy Metzger
<i>Dan Witmer</i>	***	Croaking Toad donated by Jim Butts

Celebrate Birding at the 14th Annual **SPACE COAST BIRDING & WILDLIFE FESTIVAL**

January 26-31, 2011

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To find out more contact Neta Harris at festival@brevardnaturealliance.org

321-268-5224

or visit www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlifeFestival.org

For up-to-date information about the
 Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival visit:
BlogTheBeach.com or [facebook.com/spacecoastbirdingandwildlifeFestival](https://www.facebook.com/spacecoastbirdingandwildlifeFestival)

**ACTIVITIES
AT THE
ENCHANTED
FOREST!**



Festival selected as Top 20 Event

CCP UPDATES


The Refuge Complex has completed the Lake Wales Ridge NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and is very close to completing the draft for the St. Johns NWR CCP. These are our final two plans of the six refuge complex!

Lake Wales Ridge NWR CCP Update: The Lake Wales Ridge NWR CCP has been finalized and we plan to have the final document available this winter or early spring. An electronic version will be available on the Internet (select the “Final CCP Documents” button at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning> and navigate to the Lake Wales Ridge NWR). Paper and CD copies will be available at the Refuge’s offices in Vero Beach (call 772.562.3903 x244 or email LakeWalesRidgeCCP@fws.gov) and at Merritt Island NWR’s administrative offices in Titusville (call 321-861-0667 or email MerritIsland@fws.gov). For more information, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/lakewalesridge>.

St. Johns NWR CCP Update: The St. Johns NWR CCP is presently in the planning and development stages and we anticipate delivering a draft plan for public review during the spring of 2011. Once complete, the Draft CCP will be made available for a 30-day comment period. An electronic draft version will be available on the Internet (select the “Draft CCP Documents” button at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning> and navigate to the St. Johns NWR), and paper and CD copies will be available at Merritt Island NWR (321-861-0667) or you can request a physical copy (identify CD or paper or both) via email to St.JohnsCCP@fws.gov or MerritIsland@fws.gov. There are many different ways to deliver draft comments as listed: Fax us: 321-861-8913 Email us: St.JohnsCCP@fws.gov; Mail us: St. Johns NWR CCP c/o Bill Miller, Wildlife Biologist, P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781; Phone us: 321-861-0667 or 561-715-0023

You can also sign up to be a member of the CCP’s mailing list by visiting <http://www.fws.gov/stjohns> and navigating to the mailing list form. For those who’ve already asked to be on the mailing list, you’ll be receiving a card in the mail asking whether you’d like a copy of the draft plan and in what form. If you would like a paper or CD copy, please make sure to contact us with a request for a copy. For more information, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/stjohns>, contact the Refuge at 321-861-0667, or contact Bill Miller, our Service point of contact for the CCP, at 561-715-0023.

Bill Miller, Fish and Wildlife Biologist



Adopt an Area

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 Steve “AB” Allen
 The Burke Family
 The Escoffier Family
 Tom Quinn & Rosalie Wolf
 United Waterfowlers’ of Florida

Adopt an Area Update

Adopt an Area participants have begun fall and winter clean ups of the Refuge. We now have twenty active groups enrolled including two businesses, eight families or individuals, three school groups, and seven clubs.

Since the program started in April 2009, volunteers have removed 641 bags of litter as well as numerous tires, monofilament, and other large and unusual items. Adopt an Area volunteers have participated 408 times and have contributed approximately 1227 hours to the Refuge. A special event will be held in the spring to recognize their efforts.

Areas open for adoption include Bio Lab Boat Ramp, Bio Lab Road, Gator Creek and East Gator Creek Roads, L Pond Road, Shiloh Marsh Road, Pump House Road, Pine Flatwoods Trail, the southeast side of Haulover Canal, and all shorelines except Haulover Canal.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Kathy Eichinger at 786-303-1315; keichinger@bellsouth.net or Nancy Corona at 321-861-0668; nancy_corona@fws.gov.

Kathy Eichinger, Refuge Volunteer

Goodbye to...



.....**Harold Morrow** - MINWR LE Officer and former Lake Woodruff NWR Manager has retired after 28 years with the USFWS. Harold will be taking some classes in mortuary science, fly fishing in Deland, and

spending time with his wife, Ivy and son. Best wishes to you, thank you for your years of dedication and service. We will miss you!

.....**Amanda Hoffmeyer**- intern for the Biology Department has finished her internship. She is planning to attend graduate school in the fall. Good luck with your future goals! We will miss you.

MIWA Eco Tours

Join fellow members on an eco adventure! Listed below are proposed trips for 2011. If interested in taking a group trip see contact info below. It is a great way to travel with like minded nature lovers!

Costa Rica-March 26-April 3, 2011

Cost: \$2,212 from Orlando. For reservations: Go to www.holbrooktravel.com/MIWA for itinerary and travel details.

Trip highlights:

- Search the mist-shrouded realm of the Savegre Cloud Forest Reserve for the elusive Resplendent Quetzal and learn about ongoing research at the Q.E.R.C
- Great wildlife viewing, including several species of monkeys, uncountable butterflies and hundreds of the 875 bird species that call Costa Rica home!
- Discover the wonders of tropical rain forest ecology at Selva Verde Rainforest Reserve; gain a new perspective via an optional canopy tour or rafting trip!
- Hike at the Organization for Tropical Studies-La Selva Biological Station, a nonprofit consortium of more than 50 universities and educational institutions, one of the longest-studied rain forests in the world.
- Visit the Tirimbina Rainforest Center and Museum of Indigenous Culture.

Belize- April 20-25, 2011

Cost: \$2,269 from Orlando. For reservations: Go to www.holbrooktravel.com/MIWA for itinerary and travel details.

Trip highlights:

- Explore the world famous Belize Zoo
- Discover the fascinating world of tropical birds and butterflies
- Learn about medicinal rainforest plants and Mayan culture
- Explore the world famous Mayan ruins of Caracol
- Learn about the Mayan people - past and present
- Snorkel the pristine waters of the Glovers Reef Atoll
- Learn about the Reef Ecology via talks with onsite researchers
- Stay at the Wildlife Conservation Society Field Station dorms
- Enjoy the beautiful island and crystal waters of Middle Caye
- Snorkel off the dock after dark for a peek at the ocean's nocturnal creatures

Key West & Dry Tortugas April 29-May 2, 2011: Trip Leader Dorn Whitmore (Limit 40)

This will be a 4 day trip to the Key West and the Dry Tortugas where there will be a variety of activities to choose from. All day tours/activities are optional so prices vary. We depart from the Refuge at 8:00 am Friday, April 29 and arrive at the Fairfield Inn Marriot in Key West at 4:30 pm. On Saturday, we will depart at 8:00 am aboard a powered catamaran for Fort Jefferson. Accompanying us will be Naturalist Kathy and Wayne Landrum, who worked on the Dry Tortugas for 20 years. Spring is the peak season for birding and we may see 70 species if the weather conditions are favorable. On Sunday there will be a variety of activities to choose from including: a bike tour of historic Key West, Sail/kayak/snorkel trip to Key West NWR (includes lunch), and admission to the Butterfly Conservatory. The trip includes transportation to and from Key West, 3 nights lodging (includes continental breakfast), powered catamaran boat trip to Dry Tortugas (includes breakfast and lunch), and one of the optional tours (guided bike tour, sail/kayak/snorkel, Butterfly Conservatory). We will depart Monday and arrive back at the Refuge about 5 pm. Unless noted, meals are not included.

All prices are per person unless noted. Deadline for reservations is April 1, 2011 and a \$300 deposit is required. RSVP by calling MIWA at (321) 861-2377. You may choose the activities that meet your interest and total cost vary as follows:

- Transportation (10 passenger van): \$60 per person
- Lodging \$159 per night: \$477 Double Occupancy
- Catamaran Trip to Fort Jefferson (Dry Tortugas): \$157 (\$148 with senior pass)
- Bike Tour of Historic Key West : \$39
- Sail/Kayak/Snorkel Key West NWR: \$95
- Admission to Key West Butterfly Conservatory: \$7.50



MIWA Minute



Cold weather has returned, and the visitor center is full of the sound of excited nature enthusiasts. It is great to see some of our “regulars” again. With the winter comes high visitation, and we are looking forward to another successful retail year. Please come in and shop for your field guides and nature themed t-shirts. We have a great selection and are happy to assist you with purchases. MIWA’s main income is via the Bookery; your support is greatly appreciated.

Speaking of revenue, MIWA has obligated \$80,000 towards refuge projects this fiscal year. Retail profits, grant funds, memberships, and donations are our source, so please show your support by shopping (win, win for everyone) or making a donation. Any amount is appreciated and adds up quickly. Below is a short list of ways we have put our funds to work for the Refuge, wildlife and education:

- * Spearheaded, Funded and Provided Volunteers for the Black Point Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project
- * Designed and Funded the Education Pavilion and Restrooms at the Sandler Education Outpost
- * Annual Funding of an Educator for Environmental Education and Provide all Supplies for the Programs
- * Annual Funding for Substitute Teachers & Bus Transportation for Area Students participating in EE programs
- * Annual Funding of the Public Use Intern Program
- * Annual Funding of the Volunteer & Work Camper Programs
- * Annual Lease of a GSA Truck for Volunteer Use
- * Fund Research Projects
- * Sponsor/Fund the Annual National Wildlife Refuge Week Event
- * Provide Brochures for Visitors
- * Operate the Bookery and Provide VIC Desk Support
- * Contribute Tens of Thousands of Dollars Each Year for Special Refuge Projects

The list grows larger each year! We love our Refuge and will continue to support it as requested by USFWS Officials.

I am happy to announce a donation of \$486 from *Jon’s Fine Jewelry* (JFJ) in Cocoa Village. JFJ has been a faithful supporter for a few years and generously donates to non profits monthly. MIWA is lucky to been one of the recipients! Please show your support by shopping at JFJ for a trinket or jewelry repair. They have been in business for 20 years, we wish them 20 more successful years of retailing!

Last, but not at all least, I would like to announce our newest Life Members; **Patricia Stearns and Kathy Eichinger**. Patricia’s husband, **Eugene**, recently passed and she is honoring his memory by supporting the Refuge he loved. You may remember the Stearns spearheaded the VIC Boardwalk Park Bench Project. They were the first to donate funds to purchase a bench, providing a rest stop for visitors walking the boardwalk or waiting for a special view of area songbirds. Thank you, Patricia, for thinking of the Refuge during your time of loss. We will miss Eugene.

Kathy is one of the Refuge’s most active volunteers. She heads the Friday Trail Team, created and developed the “Adopt an Area Program”, and was “2009 Volunteer of the Year”. Her boundless energy is amazing, don’t try to match it. You will only pull a muscle! Thank you Kathy for all you do for the Refuge & MIWA. You are one in a million.

In closing, thank you to all of our members. We could not give so much to the Refuge without your support. I’ll see you at the Refuge!

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager



Friday Trail Team

With the onset of cooler weather the Friday Trail Team is back in action. We have pruned and weed whacked the front entrance of the Visitor Center, trimmed back growth next to the Boardwalk, and cleared Oak and Palm Hammock Trails. Two long sections of Palm Hammock were overgrowing the trail. They are cleared and inviting for hikers.

Our next project will be to spruce up Black Point Wildlife Drive for the Birding Festival, held in late January. We will move on to Bair’s Cove area after completing Black Point. All the boat ramps, trails, and interior roads are waiting for us. We will weed whack, weed, plant, paint, spray exotics, and do whatever else is needed.

The Trail Team has also now accepted responsibility for the butterfly garden and garden behind the Visitor Center. We will devote the first Friday of every month to the garden areas. We will be weeding, trimming, and planting. Our first work day on the gardens will be February 4th, 2011

We need help! Anyone interested in spending a few hours with us would be very welcome. We work from 9:00 am until about 12:00 pm every Friday. If you want to work on the trails or in the Visitor Center gardens or both please contact Nancy Corona at 321-861-0668.

Kathy Eichinger and Ron Henderson, Refuge Volunteers

Brevard Watercolor Society Exhibit of "Images at the Refuge"



Best of Show Winner, Artist Connie Marshall
Photo by Therese Ferguson

A new glowing exhibition of art, inspired by the Refuge, is impressing guests in the Visitor Center Conference room. This is the 8th annual exhibit of Brevard Watercolor artists' work, which will be displayed in the Visitor Center auditorium until the end of January. Dorn Whitmore said "I always look forward to this show and it just gets better every year." Dorn has a vested interest in the exhibition because he frequently has escorted BWS artists on a tour of the refuge for photo opportunities, which they use as reference material for the paintings.

An opening reception for the artists was sponsored by MIWA on Sunday afternoon, November 7. Attendees were greeted by MIWA volunteer, Jo Ann Heenan as artists and members enjoyed refreshments arranged by Sandee Larsen complete with wine poured by MIWA

volunteers Betty Salter and Kathy Eichinger. Approximately 80 attended the event which was open to all MIWA members. While guests enjoyed the refreshments, live keyboard music on the deck overlooking the pond was provided by Nubbie Crawford.

Dorn Whitmore, Operation Specialist and Layne Hamilton, Refuge Manager, expressed their appreciation to the artists and Hamilton presented the Refuge Award to Adele Park for her painting "Knock on Wood," a woodpecker of course.

Other awards were presented by Darleen Hunt, co-chair, and Linda Neal, BWS President, to the following individuals: Best of show "Out on a Limb" by Connie Marshall; Best of Fauna "Here Fishy, Fishy!" by Therese Ferguson; Best of Flora "Integral Trees" by Kathie Benson; Best of Babes in the Wild "Who's Sleeping in our Room?" by Jerry Hubert; 2nd Place "Birds of a Feather" by Leslie Blanche; 3rd Place "TLC" by Betty Noone; and Merrit Awards to Gail Bishop for "Looking for Mom", Beth-Anne Fairchild for "Hootie"; Therese Ferguson for "Made in the Shade"; Lori Pitten Jenkins for "Three of a Kind" and Carole Wilen for "Fungus Amongus".

Most of the artwork is priced to sell and matted prints are available in the Bookery. A percentage of the art proceeds are donated to MIWA.

Don't miss the opportunity to visit the "Images of the Refuge" exhibition when you drive to the refuge this winter.

Darleen Hunt, MIWA Board Member, Bookery Committee Chair, & BWS Member

MINWR Butterflies Get Counted

MINWR held a NABA, North American Butterfly Association, Fall Butterfly Count on October 17, 2010. We counted 2,120 adult butterfly individuals and 29 species. Look closely at the white daisy-like Spanish Needles (*Bidens alba*) and carpet of Frog Fruit (*Phyla [Lippa] nodiflora*) along the dike roads. You may find nectaring swarms of Salt Marsh Skippers and Eastern Pygmy Blue butterflies. The Pygmy Blue has a wingspan of about 3/4" and is North America's smallest butterfly. The Pygmy Blue caterpillar host plant is the Dwarf Glasswort (*Salicornia bigelovii*). The adult food in Florida includes nectar from Palmetto Palm and Saltwort (*Batis maritima*) flowers. We see it nectaring on the Frog Fruit and Spanish Needles as they are most prevalent along our dike roads. Its habitat is found near saltwater in coastal marshes and tidal flats. The Salt Marsh Skipper caterpillar host is seashore Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) and the adult will nectar on a variety of flowers. Its Habitat is listed as the coastal salt and brackish marshes and occasionally nearby fields and woodland edges. MINWR is a prime habitat for these small creatures.

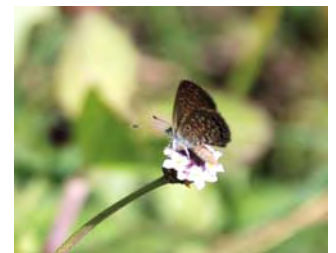
We thank our NABA butterflyers: Kathie Benson, Nancy Corona, Jack Dunkerton, Tom Dunkerton, Jim and Nancy Escoffier, Stacy Fran Kaplan, Jean Lynn, Megan Magill, Charletta McCrory, Bill Nunn, Barbara Peterson, Betty Salter, Cary Salter, Stacey Shriner, and Dan Witmer.

Join us for our monthly counts with the Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network, FBMN. No experience required just curiosity and enthusiasm for learning about butterflies and the MINWR. For information or to get on the e mail list, please contact Barbara at 321-799-2621 or vieuxb@aol.com.

Barbara Peterson, Refuge Volunteer

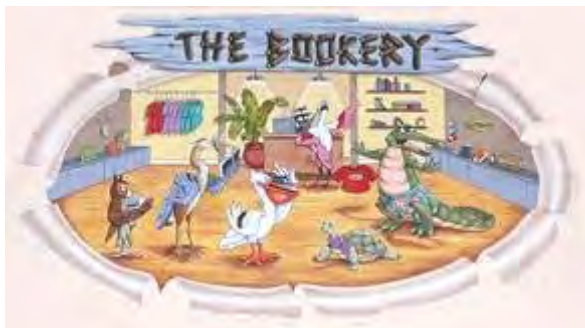


Darleen Hunt, Therese Ferguson & Dorn Whitmore enjoy the event.
Photo by Sandee Larsen



Pygmy Blue Butterfly
Photo by Barbara Petersen

New Items in



Habi-Chat has email! If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive MIWA announcements, please add us to your safe senders list and send a request to HabiChat@MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org



Gifts in remembrance were donated by
George English in memory of
Norma Bruckner

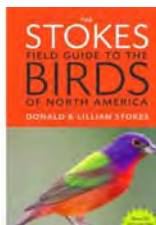
And

Jerome & Susan Raines, Mr. & Mrs. Trindle, Mr. & Mrs. Corley and Numerous Friends at the Orlando Utilities Commission in memory of
Steven Sharek

The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America

By Donna & Lillian Stokes...\$24.99

America's preeminent authorities on birds and nature - comprehensive photographic guide to North America. Bonus CD included.



Donations in remembrance of loved ones and friends can be sent to:

MIWA, P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781



Henry The Impatient Heron

By Donna Love.....\$8.95

By Sylvan Dell Publishing

Henry the Heron couldn't stand still! He was always moving and it drove everyone crazy! But herons have to stand still to catch their food, so how would Henry ever be able to eat on his own?



Where Should Turtle Be?

By Susan Ring.....\$8.95

By Sylvan Dell Publishing

Little turtle was lost! Free from his egg, he climbed out into a big beautiful new world Lost and alone her wondered-where did he really belong?



For retail information, call the MIWA Office at 321-861-2377

Visitor Information Center Hours

Monday through Friday
8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday and Sunday*
9:00 am – 5:00 pm

*VIC is closed Sundays from April – October

The Refuge is open daily from sunrise – sunset, except during Shuttle Launch/Landing operations.

Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Supporting the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Joining is simple. Just fill out this form and mail to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association at P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781 or join online at

www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Type of Membership:

- Seniors and Students – \$10
- Individual – \$15
- Senior Couples – \$15
- Family Membership – \$20
- Supporting Membership – \$50
- Senior Couple Supporting – \$75
- Life Membership – \$250
- Patron – \$1000
- Optional – Donation \$ _____

Total Enclosed _____

Make checks payable to MIWA. For credit card payments please call the MIWA office at:

321-861-2377.

Florida Scrub-Jay Festival at MINWR

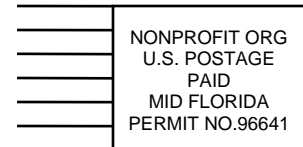
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge will host a Florida Scrub-Jay Festival from 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 12, 2011. This free family event will celebrate the Florida Scrub-Jay, which is a threatened species found only in Florida. In addition, visitors will learn about endangered scrub habitat and the many species of plants and animals that call scrub habitat their home. The festival will offer live music, guided nature walks, presentations, live animal displays, face painting, crafts and activities for children, and environmental exhibits. Refreshments will be on sale through MIWA. The festival is supported by the education committee of the Northeast Florida Scrub Working Group. The education committee was formed to create educational opportunities, promote conservation, and increase awareness of scrub habitat and the Florida-Scrub Jay. The Scrub-Jay Festival is a significant part of this education outreach project. This annual festival will be hosted by a different conservation agency each year at varying locations across the state. This year's events will be located at the Refuge's Sandler Education Outpost Pavilion and the Refuge Visitor Center. Call 321-861-5601 for information. Donations are being accepted to support this and future Scrub-Jay Festivals. If you would like to make a donation, mail a check (memo- Scrub-Jay Festival) to MIWA, POB 2683, Titusville, FL 32781.



The Visitor Center is located on SR 402, 5 miles east of the intersection of U.S. 1 and State Road 406 (Garden Street) in Titusville. The Sandler Education Outpost is located on State Road 3 (Kennedy Parkway) and is located eight miles from the Refuge Visitor Center
Nancy Corona, Public Use Ranger.



Merritt Island Wildlife Association
P.O. Box 2683
Titusville, FL 32781
www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org



Refuge Bird Tours are held weekly on Tues, Thurs., Sat. and Sundays at 9am. Cost is \$3 per person-**MIWA Members Free!** Call 321-861-5601 to reserve a space.

