



Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 17 Number 3

Fall 2011

2012 Eco-Tourism Summit

Titusville serves as the gateway for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Canaveral National Seashore, and Kennedy Space Center. Our community's future depends upon partnerships that protect our natural resources and promote sustainable economic development. This spring, Refuge Manager Layne Hamilton, Canaveral National Seashore Superintendent Myrna Palfrey, Titusville Mayor Jim Tulley, Titusville Area Chamber of Commerce President Marcia Gaedcke, and Dixie Crossroad Restaurant owner Laurilee Thompson formed a team to focus on eco-tourism based on local public lands. The team attended the Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia in April to learn how to capitalize on our environmental assets to promote the Titusville area as an eco-tourism destination while highlighting the community's symbiotic relationship between technology and the environment. The weeklong training focused on the concept of sustainable tourism and building the economy through partnerships with public lands, while maintaining the unique character of the community.

The next stage in this program is to host a local summit to engage the community in promoting sustainable economic development and a unified vision for Titusville. While the overarching theme is nature, the tools that this summit will bring to the community will be relevant to art and culture, retail development, transportation and many other areas and will dovetail directly with the work of the Greater Titusville Renaissance. Currently, the core team is working along with NASA Planner Mario Busacca, Brevard Cultural Alliance Executive Director Neil Levine, Aide to Commissioner Fisher Liz Lakovichaide, and Kris Hoellen from The Conservation Fund. Together they will develop an exciting and relevant program to be held in Spring 2012. This endeavor would not be possible if not for the financial support of MIWA, which funded the travel for three of the team members to West Virginia, and has agreed to co-sponsor the 2012 Titusville summit.

Layne Hamilton, MINWR Project Leader



Roseate Spoonbills in Flight
Photo by Joel Reynolds



Leatherback Hatchling 2011
Photo by Steven Trull, MINWR Bio Tech



2011 MINWR Sea Turtle Nesting Survey

There are only a few weeks of sea turtle nesting season left. However, our sea turtles haven't received the memo and are still nesting strong. Leatherbacks are done for the year with 4 nests. Greens are shifting into high gear with 142 nests with Loggerhead nests totaling 1,066 thus far.

Last year the season started late and ended late so comparing numbers are like comparing oranges to tangerines. 2010 provided us with some of the highest numbers with 1,163 Loggerheads, 142 Greens, and 6 Leatherback reportable nests totaling 1,311 nests.

We are still averaging 10 nests daily and only 50 nests out of 1,212 nests have been predated by coyote, bobcat, raccoon, hog, or ghost crab this year. There are 299 nests to excavate so far. We are on pace to surpass last year's nesting season making this a successful year for us and our sea turtles.

Steven Trull, Biological Science Technician, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

President's Message

Hello from the refuge! It is hot and rainy which means the impoundments are full of water and are doing a great job of raising the infamous salt marsh mosquito.

As you know one of the most important board meetings of the year occurs in the month of August. This is about two months before our new fiscal year. It is at this "Blue Sky" meeting were we address funding for refuge projects for the new year. As requested by refuge staff members, there are basically two groups of projects: **Routine projects** such as environmental education and volunteer programs that require continued funding from one year to the next. Then, there are **Special projects** that are specific for the fiscal year of 2012. These include funds for a local conference on balancing nature and commerce and a smoke and fire detection system for the VIC. You will be happy to know that we were able to provide funds for all requested projects from both categories. The cost of these obligations amounted to about \$72,000. At this time, between savings, checking, money market accounts and projected net income in 2012 we have about \$100,000. This may be even higher if we receive a \$25,000 grant written and proposed by our refuge liason Dorn Whitmore. This grant will help pay for at least one-half the cost of our new minibus, which has been purchased, and is ready to go. We will keep you updated.

Please join us for a fun-filled evening at our Annual Meeting on October 12th @ 6 pm (see back page for details). There will be two keynote speakers, a silent auction, a refuge update and a wonderful dinner put on by Bill Moore of the Delaware North Parks and Resorts Corporation. A good time will be had by all. Hope to see you there.

I want to thank each and every one of you for all you do for our Refuge & MIWA. We could not do it without you!
Jim Pedersen, MIWA President



Jim Pedersen, MIWA President
Photo by Carol Pedersen



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 John Shaffer

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

Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors

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PROTECTING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE



Deep Cuts to National Wildlife Refuges and Guts Key Land Acquisition, Grant, and Climate Change Programs

A 21% cut to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and 8% cut to Refuges, will result in the closure of 140 Refuges, elimination of 300 Refuge staff positions, elimination of any new land acquisitions and conservation easements and prevent any new endangered species listings.

Washington, DC—The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) was stunned over the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee's proposed \$37 million cut to the National Wildlife Refuge System's budget as part of an overall 21% cut to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency charged with overseeing the 150 million acre system.

"Despite the extraordinary economic, ecological and public benefits that come from conservation funding, the House has chosen to slash an already meager Refuge System and natural resources budget," said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "By doing so, Congress threatens America's clean air and water and safe places families depend on for recreation and renewal."

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, or CARE, a diverse coalition of conservation and sporting organizations chaired by NWRA, estimates the System needs at least \$900 million annually to properly function. The House proposal would be just over half that much at \$452 million and would mean 140 refuges would close, 300 positions would be eliminated and critical habitat restoration projects would not be completed, growing the already enormous backlog of operations and maintenance needs.

The House plan would also slash the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) by 80% to the lowest level in its 45-year history with only \$11 million for the Refuge System; barely enough to finish projects started this fiscal year. This level of funding would bring Refuge System land acquisition projects to a screeching halt leaving hundreds of private landowners seeking to sell their land or obtain conservation easements in limbo. Further, such a cut violates a trust with the American people as LWCF revenues are derived from small percentage of offshore oil and gas lease receipts and intended as reciprocation for extraction of resources from the public domain.

"The LWCF is one of the strongest tools a land manager has to protect key habitats and promote good will in communities," said Hirsche. "Drastic cuts to LWCF not only hurts wildlife, but also hard working farmers and ranchers who seek conservation easements that help protect wildlife habitat while also allowing them to stay on the land and keep family business intact."

The bill further proposes to eliminate funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund and drastically reduce funding for climate change programs, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), which funds wetland restoration on refuges, the State Wildlife Grants program that helps states keep species from becoming endangered and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Programs which helps the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) work directly with private landowners. Further, the bill takes aim at bedrock environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act; language in the bill prohibits the FWS from any new endangered species listing.

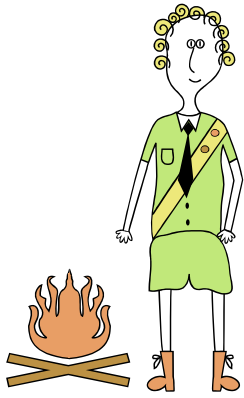
NWRA is asking Congress to fund the Refuge System at \$511 million in Fiscal Year 2012, level funding from FY 2010. NWRA, its conservation partners in CARE and more than 230 local "Refuge Friends" groups will work with Congress to restore funding for the Refuge System in any final FY 2012 spending bill.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity.

Excerpt from the National Wildlife Refuge Association Newsletter



Jr. Ranger Summer Fun



Children ages 6-9 and their families were invited to attend MINWR's free Summer Jr. Ranger Program. Programs included: Owls and Owl Pellet dissection, Seining the Indian River Lagoon, Freshwater Pond Exploration, Fascinating Reptiles and All About Manatees. MIWA sponsored the program through the purchase of supplies and hiring guest speakers. The audience was treated to encounters with live animals including screech and barred owls from the Florida Wildlife hospital, the rarely seen brackish water turtle, the diamond-backed terrapin, a young alligator and Buddy, the Red-rat snake.

Parents and children explored together the environmental topics through hands on activities including dissecting owl pellets containing animal skeletons and using seine nets to catch and study and then release the near shore life of the Indian River Lagoon such as sea horses, pipe fish and blue-clawed crabs. The children explored the fresh water pond using dip nets to capture dragonfly nymphs, freshwater shrimp, and diving beetles. During the culminating event, several students presented their independent projects. Several children built screech owl nesting boxes while others researched a topic, created a poster and presented it to the audience. Jr. Rangers that completed the program requirements received a Jr. Ranger Certificate at the award ceremony along with a MINWR patch and pin. Afterwards, newly crowned Jr. Rangers celebrated by eating cupcakes and cookies with their new refuge friends.

Thank you MIWA members for supporting our Jr. Rangers.

Nancy Corona, Public Use Manager



Upcoming Refuge Events

International Beach Clean-up: Join your fellow Brevard County Residents at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge for International Beach Clean-up Day at Haulover Canal on Saturday, September 17th from 8 am to 12 pm, sponsored by Keep Brevard Beautiful. Volunteers will clean up, as well as, conduct an important survey on the type and amount of litter found. Directly after, volunteers are invited to enjoy a free hot dog and refreshments sponsored by the M.I.W.A

National Public Lands Day: Celebrate Your National Public Lands at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteers will trim plants, mulch and pick up litter in public use areas on Saturday, September 24th @ 9 am.

National Wildlife Refuge Week at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge: Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week, October 9th to October 15th at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. This annual event celebrates the National Wildlife Refuge System's pivotal role in offering visitors outdoor recreational opportunities as well as showcasing the conservation and recovery of wildlife species on Refuges across the country. The main event is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 15th. Please call for a schedule of events. Please call 321-861-5601 for reservations and information for all events.

Nancy Corona, Public Use Ranger



Goodbye to...

...*Eva Windhaffer* and *Jon Dachenhaus*, both Summer College Interns working with the Biology Department. These interns did a variety of duties including controlling exotic plants, sea turtle nest inventorying and assisting with school programs. Eva will finish her degree at the University of Maryland and Jon will finish his degree at McAlister College. We wish them good luck.

Beginning Birding Tours

The MINWR offers Beginning Birding Tours each Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday from **November through March**. MIWA President Jim Pedersen and I are your guides on the Tuesday & Thursday Tours.

An amazing number of plants & wildlife species can be found on your refuge: 330+ birds, 117 fish, 66 amphibians and reptiles, 33 mammals and over 1100 plant species!

We start our Tuesday & Thursday Tours at 9 a.m. at the Refuge Visitor Center and return around noon. You'll be driven to several Refuge Hot Spots in our Brand-New Minibus. The \$3 Tour Fee is waived for all MIWA members.

Jim & I like to call our Tuesday & Thursday adventures the “**Birds and More Tour**”. On our travels around the Refuge, we always point out and ID lots of birds for you...often 50+ bird species. We also ID and discuss the many other critters and plants that we see along the way. It's not unusual for us to come across the occasional River Otter, Raccoon, Feral Pig, Armadillo, Bobcat, Snake and, of course, plenty of Gators. Stop by the Refuge or call at 321-861-0669 to sign up for our Tours that will begin in November.

Join us. You'll enjoy the tour & learn some interesting facts about your Refuge, its history and its many inhabitants!
Ned Steel, MIWA Board Member



Great Blue Heron
Photo by Joel Reynolds



MIWA Board & MINWR Staff with New Tour Bus
Photo by Sandee Larsen

Take a Tour in Style

MIWA is happy to announce the Refuge Tour Bus has been delivered! The Star Craft 14 Passenger Bus is a dream come true. It has a center aisle, step up stairs for ease of entry, dual ac, and a speaker system (no more yelling to the back of the bus!). Watch for our Refuge Events announcements and consider attending a birding tour (Nov-March) in the bus. MIWA Members are free.

Thank you to members Linda Nociti, Don Doerr and Carol Stevens for donating to our tour bus fund. And a “BIG THANK YOU” to the Jean Vance Trust for her major donation and to MINWR Supervisory Ranger Dorn Whitmore for helping acquire a matching grant for the purchase.

Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager



Refuge Sightings

On May 31st, a group from the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) was sighted touring the Refuge. MIWA Board Members Jim Pedersen and Ned Steel and Volunteer Al Brayton acted as bird scouts, Refuge hosts and comic relief for the group. The weather was pleasant and quite a few bird species were sighted. All enjoyed the day, promising to return for another refuge adventure!



NASA Director, Bob Cabana (front-center) with Group
Photo by NASA staff

On, June 2nd, NASA Director Bob Cabana and a few of his staff were treated to a tour of the

Refuge by the refuge supervisory staff. Afterwards, all were treated to a luncheon provided by MIWA. The day was hot and rainy, but successful. A few bird species were sighted as the group ventured into closed areas to view scrub habitat and search for the endangered Florida Scrub-jay. Mr. Cabana enjoyed the day and hopes to return during our bird season to view migrating flocks of waterfowl and wading birds. It was an honor to meet Mr. Cabana and the NWRA group, thanks for visiting!

Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager



NWRA Group with Refuge Guides.
Photo by Dorn Whitmore



MIWA Board Member, Charlie Venuto awards MIWA President, Jim Pedersen, USA donation
Photo by Dorn Whitmore

MIWA Minute

The dog days of summer are almost gone and we are eagerly looking forward to cool, crisp weather. MIWA stayed busy during the slow season, cleaning shelves, opening the Bookery for Canaveral National Seashore Sea Turtle Programs, and planning the annual meeting. Please note the invitation on the end page of this issue and join us for a great night of food, reports and fun. We are still in need of silent auction items for this event. If you have a nature related item or a gift card to donate, please contact the MIWA office at 321-861-2377. All donations are tax deductible.

I am happy to announce MIWA's newest Life Members: **Mr. & Mrs. Eric Gardez** of Merritt Island, **Paula Preston** of Titusville, **Mr. & Mrs. H.D. Strieter** of Cocoa Beach, **Jim Tulley** of Titusville, and **Joel**

Reynolds also of Titusville. Eric is a longtime member and has been a great supporter via his company's (United Technology) matching gift program. Paula is also a great supporter via our memorial bench program. The Strieters have been members since 2002 and have a love of nature and the Refuge. Jim, one of our newest Board Members, is also a true nature lover and Refuge supporter. And last, but not least, Joel has been a great friend to MIWA and the Refuge, donating numerous photos for our newsletter and presentations. Thank you to all our newbie's, your support is greatly appreciated!

In May, MIWA received a double gift when **BNY Mellon** employees had a company clean up on the Refuge. Afterwards the BNY Mellon Community Partnership Team Volunteer Program awarded MIWA a donation that equaled a day's pay for all BNY Mellon employees who attended. A total of \$420 in funds were received. Thank you BNY Mellon staffers for litter busting the Refuge and thank you to **Roman Quitoriano** for encouraging his fellow employees to become involved! If your company has a similar program, please suggest a clean up at the Refuge. We have no shortage of roads to keep clean!

A "BIG Thank You" to **United Space Alliance (USA)** for donating \$1,000 to MIWA. These funds will be earmarked for environmental education programs at the Refuge. USA has generously supported MIWA for many years and is committed to educating area youth on the importance of wildlife habitats and conservation. Thank you Charlie Venuto of USA, your continued support is a blessing and is an important part of this year's funding.

For membership, retail, or donation information please call the MIWA office at 321-861-2377. If you would like to become a volunteer or need group program information you can contact Refuge Ranger, Nancy Corona at 321-861-0668. I'll see you at the Refuge!

Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager



The Highs and Lows of Turtle Walks

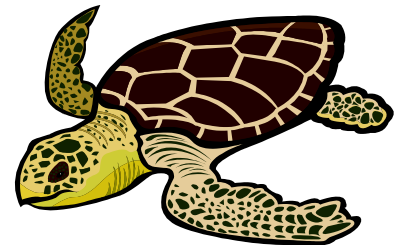
Ever have anyone ask if you had a high & low during a trip? Well, MIWA Members have experienced both sides of the chart during our seasonal MIWA Members' Sea Turtle Walks.

On June 18th, 19 members attended a program at the VIC. Unfortunately, inclement weather cancelled the tour. Refuge Ranger Nancy Corona did her best to stall the group, finally surrendering to Mother Nature.

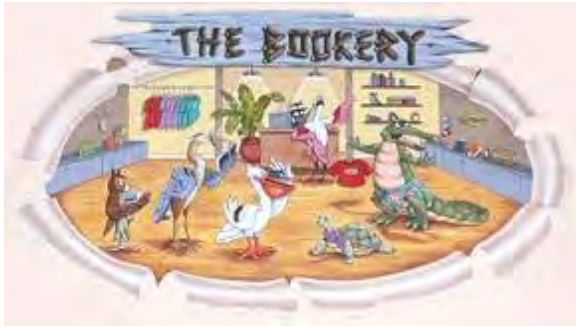
On July 9th, 49 members arrived, eager for a turtle encounter. Nancy again provided an educational and entertaining program and we all held our breath for good evening weather. Luckily, our prayers were answered and thanks for turtle scouts, Dan and Terry Cleary, a loggerhead was sighted. Not only did the group enjoy the nesting procedure, but the beach sand had a faint glow of bioluminescence. After laying approximately 100 eggs, the turtle, named Jessie by the children, slowly returned to the sea as the group happily watched. The nest was covered with a protective grid, ending the evening's program.

Thank you to Nancy, Dan, Terry, volunteers Bill Nunn, and Glen Holman and CNS Park Rangers, Leslie Peters and Bev Osborne for a wonderful program and beautiful evening.

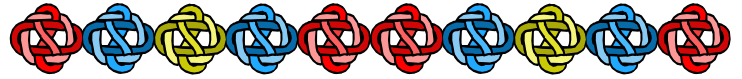
Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager



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**



MIWA has made a donation to the
Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed
Land & Water Trust
In memory of Jim Goodwin

Hermit Crab

By Safari, Ltd.....\$8.99
Extra large, soft, playful, true-to-life vinyl replica of a hermit crab. This is a fun way to spark the innate curiosity of a child. Educational information in five languages is included. This product is phthalate-free and thoroughly safety tested to safeguard your child's health.



Donations to MIWA in remembrance of loved ones and friends can be sent to:
MIWA, P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781



Red-eared Slider Turtle

By Safari, Ltd.....\$8.99
Replicas of a Red-eared Slider Turtle. Excellent learning tool to introduce young children to the often-endangered inhabitants of our planet. Educational information in five languages is included. It is hand-painted, phthalate-free and thoroughly safety tested.



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

Individuals – \$15

Senior Couples – \$15

Family Memberships – \$20

Supporting Memberships – \$50

Senior Couple Supporting – \$75

Life Memberships – \$250

Patron – \$1,000

Optional – Donation \$ _____

Total Enclosed _____

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

321-861-2377.

*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.



*You're Invited to the
Merritt Island Wildlife Association
Annual Meeting*



Join us for an evening of fun while helping support the Refuge!

*Guest Speakers: NWRA President Evan Hirsche and
Richard Crossley, Author of the Crossly ID Guide*

When: October 12, 2011

Time: 6:00 pm

Where: The Debus Center at the KSC Visitor Complex

Sponsored by Delaware North Parks & Resorts, KSC Visitor Complex

*Cash Bar & Silent Auction
Dinner (\$25pp)
Corporate Tables available*

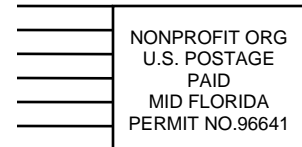
*Watch your mailbox for your invitation & RSVP
via response card or
phone at 321-861-2377 by October 5th.*

Call for Silent Auction Donations

MIWA is requesting donation items for the annual meeting silent auction. Gift certificates, **artwork**, handmade items, and anything with a **nature theme** are needed. All donations are tax deductible and will be displayed with your name or company name. Contact MIWA at 321-861-2377 for additional information!



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



Please check the expiration date on the address label and, if expired, renew your membership via page 7 today!

