FWC VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Annual Report **2012-2013**

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

On the cover: *A Boy Scout Mother and Son, as part of an FWC Ridge Rangers project, plant pine seedlings to restore habitat in the Lake Wales Ridge State Forest.*

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“The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: **Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.”**

–Ivan H. Scheier, Ph.D., was considered a pioneer in the field of volunteerism. He is known for his professional on-site consulting for volunteer programs and citizen participation efforts in the US and Canada since 1967.

Right: *Volunteer Dr. Natalie Lamneck X-rays an alligator snapping turtle to look for ingested fish hooks. Dr. Lamneck is a horse veterinarian in High Springs. Her expertise and portable digital X-ray machine were extremely beneficial to a study of alligator snapping turtles in the Suwannee River.*

Value in Volunteers

Photos left to right: *Volunteer intern Travis Shepperly, along with Officers Jason Tidwell and Jason Futch, caught a subject harvesting freshwater fish by spearfishing; Volunteer Debbie Langley holds a Wilson Snipe after banding on Fox Island within Lake Okeechobee; Volunteer Connor Mulligan uses a scope to locate nests to help FWC staff monitor RCW populations.*

FWC volunteers continue to make a positive impact, by increasing project capacity, as well as expanding public knowledge and awareness of the **FWC mission: Manage fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.**

INTRODUCTION

Photos left to right: *FWC biologist Tyler Beck holds a black crappie and largemouth bass. Volunteer Anton Lauter holds an Atlantic needlefish. These fish were caught by trawling on Lake Okeechobee; Volunteer instructors teach youth safe and responsible hunting.*

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) believes that volunteers are essential partners to meet the conservation challenges we face in Florida. Volunteers bring additional effort, experiences, skills, diverse ideas and perspectives to the FWC team. They also help enlist broad community support for the agency's mission.

Volunteers work throughout the agency in many functional areas. The Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services (PAWV) facilitates these efforts by providing volunteer coordination, placement and management. PAWV also develops external partnerships and support for FWC volunteer programs.

This report highlights the many accomplishments volunteers have helped FWC staff achieve.

Since 2007, **more than 22,000 volunteers** of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and skills from rural, suburban and urban areas **have participated in FWC volunteer projects.**

EXCEPTIONAL EFFORT

"There is never going to be enough ways to thank you! Volunteering with you has opened up so many opportunities for me."

–Danielle DeSilvestro, high school student volunteer for the Tarpon Genetic Recapture Study. She won the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Proficiency Award in the state of Florida for work she completed during her time at FWC. She collected DNA samples from tarpon in the wild and participated in processing tarpon DNA samples in the laboratory. Danielle is also a Nationals Finalist for the Agricultural Proficiency Awards honoring FFA members who have developed specialized skills that they can apply toward their future careers.

Volunteer Danielle DiSilvestro is awarded second place in the Women's Division of the 2013 All Release Tarpon Tournament

EXCEPTIONAL EFFORT

Volunteer Audrey Swindal has been facilitating Project Wild workshops for 30 years.

Fiscal Year 2012-2013 was another active, productive and successful year for the FWC Volunteer Program. Citizens of all ages, backgrounds and skills contributed their time to assist with activities such as facility and ground maintenance, wildlife research, biological sampling and monitoring, laboratory work and habitat restoration. The FWC benefits from the skills, experiences and dedication of volunteers, and, in turn, we strive to offer our volunteers fulfilling, meaningful and satisfying volunteer experiences.

"My 30-year-old love affair with Project WILD keeps me young and active."

–Audrey Swindal, recognized by the Council for Environmental Education (National Project WILD office) as Florida's Facilitator of the Year.

HOW IT ALL ADDED UP

Fiscal Year 2012-2013	Agency Totals
Volunteer Hours	117,638
Volunteer Count	4,866[1]
Value of Volunteer Hours	$2,604,508[2]
Full-time Equivalent (FTE)	~ 56 Positions

Division/Office/Institute	Volunteer Hours
Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management	2,731
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation	24,706
Division of Hunting and Game Management	36,154
Division of Law Enforcement	17,406
Division of Marine Fisheries Management	2,843
Fish and Wildlife Research Institute	22,186
Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network	5,468
Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services	6,144

The current value to the agency, which totals volunteer data collected for the past six years, is 656,955 volunteer hours valued at $13,839,099 or 315 full time equivalent positions. Volunteers have also donated effort to 161 programs, with 76% of these programs and 31% of total volunteers focused on conservation specific activities such as monitoring species of greatest conservation need and restoring wildlife habitat.

Since fiscal year 2007-2008, total volunteer hours have increased by 26%, resulting in an additional value to the agency of $509,975[3]; and total retention has increased from 35% to 53%. FWC retains volunteers, on average, 1.8 years. Volunteer retention is an important indicator of satisfaction with the volunteer experience.

1 Volunteer Count includes both active Regular Service Volunteers and Occasional Service Volunteers during the 2012-2013 fiscal year.
2 Value calculated using Independent Sector 2012 national estimate on value of a volunteer hour: $22.14 (http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time).
3 Value calculated using an average of the Independent Sector national estimate on value of a volunteer hour from fiscal years 2007-2008 to 2012-2013: $20.98. (http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteer Danny Rush helps FWC staff rescue an orphaned manatee calf on Merritt Island.

"The study of nature is a limitless field, the most fascinating adventure in the world."

–Margaret Norse Nice, awarded the Brewster Medal by the American Ornithologists' Union.

Citizen Science and Research

Citizen science and research are key to maintaining stable or increasing populations of fish and wildlife.

- The Florida Bonneted Bat (*Eumops glaucinus floridanus*), a state-threatened species and one of 13 species native to Florida, has been known to inhabit bat houses. Volunteers assisted with occupancy assessments at the Chinsegut Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA) and the Half Moon Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Information collected from occupancy assessments will lead to recommendations on bat house sites, and may provide trend information on bat house use.
- FWC conserves Florida manatees by identifying and reducing causes of mortality, disturbance and injury; by protecting essential habitats needed by manatees; by monitoring the status of these endangered animals; and by coordinating activities needed to protect manatees. Volunteers and FWC staff respond to reports of sick, injured, orphaned, dead or tagged manatees. Volunteers also aid staff in manatee rescue and carcass salvage.
- The Tarpon Genetic Recapture Study relies on volunteer anglers collecting DNA samples and submitting them to researchers, who can then track individual tarpon using DNA profiles. Volunteers and volunteer interns replenished tarpon DNA sampling kits and posters, retrieved samples from local tournaments, verified samples, entered data, submitted samples for DNA extractions, and summarized tournament sample contributions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Citizen Science and Research

- The American Oystercatcher needs extensive sandbars and mudflats for feeding, and sand or shell-covered beaches free from predators and human disturbance for nesting. Nesting habitat loss is suspected to have contributed to their decline. Volunteers keep researchers updated on the progress of these shorebird nests and chicks. When the chicks are old enough, researchers send a crew to catch and band the shorebirds.
- Volunteers also assisted FWC biologists with numerous white-tailed deer projects; monitoring, trap-training and banding Florida Scrub-Jays; monitoring and trapping Northern Bobwhite quail; banding doves and songbirds; monitoring Southeastern American Kestrels, blue bird and wood duck nest boxes; gopher tortoise, herpetological and beach nesting bird surveys; camera surveys of wild turkeys; biological data collection for hogs and turkeys; and, the distribution and population trends of common and imperiled butterfly species for the Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network.

Volunteer Doris Leary holds an American Oystercatcher while FWC biologist Carolyn Enloe bands the young bird.

"I'm continually impressed by the dedication of volunteers in both Jay Watch and in the Ocala National Forest Scrub-Jay Monitoring project. Without citizen scientists, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for many land managers to cover enough ground to monitor Scrub-Jay population status and trend and to make informed management decisions."

–Craig Faulhaber, Florida Scrub-Jay Conservation Coordinator at FWC's Northeast Regional Office.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteer Molly Phillips and volunteer intern Jessica Schroeder sort through specimens from the 2013 SEAMAP cruises with FWC Research Technician Jennifer Stepp.

"The growing field of public participation in scientific research includes citizen science, volunteer monitoring, and other forms of organized research in which members of the public engage in the process of scientific investigations: asking questions, collecting data, and/or interpreting results."

–The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Citizen Science and Research

- The Stock Enhancement Research Facility (SERF) teaches the basic principles of aquaculture and the benefits of marine stock enhancement as a fisheries management tool. Volunteers and volunteer interns propagated and reared red drum, common snook, spotted seatrout, zooplankton and phytoplankton for SERF and conducted field sampling with the Fisheries Independent Monitoring group.
- The biological data collected from fish is used to analyze lake productivity and help determine size and bag limits for lakes. Volunteers participated in bass tournament monitoring and catch evaluation, angler and creel surveys, as well as specimen acquisition and evaluation on a variety of fish. Volunteers also provided assistance to anglers, including documenting fish for the TrophyCatch program.
- Volunteers and volunteer interns support statewide artificial reef program management, permitting, and artificial reef monitoring assessment. Activities include reef surveys and fish censuses at over 2,700 of Florida's artificial reef locations, oversight of artificial reef construction projects, and collecting fish for analysis from the Oriskany Reef.
- The Specimens Information Services also benefitted from the assistance of volunteers and volunteer interns who collected specimens in the field, cataloged and curated specimens, collected tissue samples and preserved the specimens for collection, as well as identified and presented findings on larval fishes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Management, Restoration and Public Access

Volunteers help FWC ensure that current and future generations can enjoy our fish and wildlife.

- Prescribed fire is a cost-efficient and effective means to restore and maintain wildlife habitat.
  - Volunteers maintained fire lines with heavy equipment and fire-prepped approximately 100 acres at Chinsegut, Perry Oldenburg and Janet Butterfield Brooks WEAs. Volunteers also assisted with firebreak maintenance and prescribed burns on 147 acres at Chassahowitzka WMA.
- Invasive plants degrade the native habitat of Florida; and, volunteers provide manpower to combat the problem.
  - Volunteers hand-pulled and conducted chemical treatment of invasive plants over numerous invasive plant removal workdays on FWC and partner conservation lands throughout central and south Florida, including a series of workdays on National Public Lands Day.
  - Volunteers used GPS technology and plant identification skills to map areas for invasive plants, making contracted spraying projects more cost effective.
- Scrub and sandhill are two unique natural communities in Florida. These communities are the focus of long-term volunteer projects because they provide homes for a range of wildlife species.
  - Volunteers gathered and potted acorns as well as planted 700 viable oaks for the Royce Ranch Ground Cover Restoration project; planted 6,500 native plants on FWC and partner conservation lands; planted 2,900 wiregrass plugs at Half Moon WMA; thinned oaks at Chinsegut, Perry Oldenburg and Janet Butterfield Brooks WEAs; planted trees on tree islands and surveyed tree survival at the Rotenberger and Everglades WMAs.

Volunteer Jason Hewett, as part of an FWC Ridge Rangers project, cuts down a slash pine to restore scrub oak habitat at Avon Park Air Force Range.

"Land health is the capacity for self-renewal in the soils, waters, plants, and animals that collectively comprise the land."

–Aldo Leopold, considered by many as the father of wildlife management and of the United States wilderness system. Leopold was a conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator, writer and outdoor enthusiast.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteer intern Matt Garske assisted with tree island plantings as well as survival checks of the planted trees at Rotenberger and Everglades WMAs.

"FWC volunteers are very knowledgeable about the activities they perform and are a vital part of our conservation programs."

–Cason Pope, biologist, Field Operations at the Babcock/Webb WMA office.

Management, Restoration and Public Access

- Habitat enhancements like nest boxes and signs to protect nesting habitat are used to provide a boost for some species.
  - An Eagle Scout candidate donated time to build bat boxes for the Blackwater WMA, and volunteers installed 100 signs delineating protective buffers around Snail Kite nesting habitat on Lake Tohopekaliga in FWC's Northeast Region.
- Visitors to our wildlife management areas benefit from a variety of projects completed with the assistance of volunteers. Volunteers worked hard to improve the visitor experience.
  - Removed barb wire fence and debris on FWC and partner conservation lands;
  - Maintained the man-made islands of Lake Okeechobee, including planting trees, removing tree guards and staking trees;
  - Maintained trails as well as painted signs for the butterfly and bird garden at the Chinsegut Conservation Center and maintained over 10 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails at Tenoroc FMA;
  - Mowed roads and wildlife openings at the Apalachicola River WEA and the Blackwater WMA; maintained picnic shelters and other facilities at the campgrounds of the Babcock/Webb WMA, and built a wildlife viewing blind at Jennings State Forest;
  - Operated hunter check stations on Three Lakes WMA and assisted with mobility-impaired hunts at the Blackwater WMA – Hutton Unit.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Education and Outreach

Volunteers help FWC inspire Floridians to become stewards of our fish and wildlife resources through FWC's educational and outreach programs. Volunteers assist staff with many aspects of these programs, from preparation to instruction.

- The Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network encourages and empowers youth to participate in traditional outdoor recreation and become stewards for Florida's natural resources. Youth volunteers participated in Paddle Pick-ups to remove debris from rivers.
- Volunteers assisted with Women's and Youth Saltwater Fishing Clinics, the Nature Coast Fishing for Youth Program at Cedar Key, fish camps at FWC's Marine Hatchery, as well as fishing derbies, school programs, nature festivals, the Florida State Fair, Florida Sportsmen Fishing Expos and the Tampa Tribune Outdoor Expo.
- Sixty volunteer facilitators maintained a large network of educators around the state. These facilitators offered 29 Project Wild, 21 Aquatic Wild, 31 Growing Up Wild, six Flying Wild, one Science and Civics, 13 Schoolyard Wildlife, one Schoolyard Ecosystems and one Florida Black Bear workshop for 1,519 participants.
- Volunteers presented 14 educational programs such as Children in the Wild, Archery, Map & Compass, GPS, Geocache and Backpacking 101 at the Chinsegut Conservation Center. Volunteers also assisted with the Nature Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival, Bat and Spider Prowl and the Reptile and Amphibian Expo, as well as Wildlife Adventures and the Hernando County Extension and 4-H Bugs, Plants and Biology camps.

Volunteers removed debris from the Sopchoppy River during FYCCN's Paddle Pick-up.

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

–Albert Einstein, a German-born physicist who received the Nobel Prize in Physics for developing the Theory of Relativity.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteer intern for the Bear Management Program educates youth about bears during Earth Day at the Capitol in Tallahassee.

"Next time my dad goes gator hunting, he won't be leaving without me. Thanks for this memorable hunt."

–Alana Pouliot, a participant in a weekend alligator hunt in Palm Beach County. There were five youth on this hunt. Youth Hunt volunteers shared their knowledge of how to hunt for alligators. Licensed alligator trappers also donated time and equipment to the youth hunters. The hunt ended with all the youth harvesting an alligator.

Education and Outreach

- Volunteer instructors hosted 550 Hunter Safety classes resulting in 13,222 graduates as well as 49 hunts for 438 youth and parents for the Youth Hunting Program of Florida. These volunteer instructors also hosted archery, Bowhunter Education, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman and many Beyond BOW events that included hog hunts, deer hunts, trapping, firearms, camping, canoeing, kayaking and fishing.
- The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail promotes sustainable wildlife tourism as an incentive for communities to conserve wildlife habitat. Volunteers inspected sites, photographed and documented wildlife species, led field trips to GFBWT destinations, and promoted GFBWT destinations at the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival.
- Volunteers and volunteer interns participated in bear management outreach and data collection events, including speaking with over 17,000 people at more than 150 outreach events statewide and canvassing 1,254 homes in 13 different neighborhoods within FWC's Northeast Region. Their projects also included conducting surveys of Floridians about their experience with FWC; developing an online document to teach developers how to create a bear-wise community; launching and oversight of a contest to "bear-proof" wildlife feeders; and creating a cub rehabilitation protocol.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Operations

Volunteers donate time to a variety of administrative and operational projects. Volunteers not only contribute their skills and manpower, but save staff time and money by performing these necessary tasks.

- Volunteers created a GIS map of the Brooksville Ridge to present at education and outreach events. This map highlighted volunteer opportunities that benefit ridge habitat.
- Volunteers also built storage facilities as well as provided general maintenance on heavy equipment, vehicles and boats for the FWC's Division of Habitat and Species Conservation.

Annemarie Hammond, former FWC Brooksville Ridge Volunteer Coordinator, used the Brooksville Ridge map created by volunteers as a tool for partner and volunteer recruitment. She stands with volunteer BJ Quinton as they prepare to monitor Southeastern American Kestrel nest boxes in Hernando County.

"Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it."

–Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States from 1953 until 1961. He was a five-star general in the United States Army during World War II and served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteer reservists receive an award of service from FWC Law Enforcement.

Protection

Reserve Officers volunteer their time as sworn Law Enforcement Officers, purchase all associated equipment, and work under the direct supervision of FWC Law Enforcement personnel. They are excellent force multipliers, patrolling day or night, on land, on the water or in the air.

- Eighty-three Reserve Officers throughout the state assisted the FWC Division of Law Enforcement in its mission to project the state's wildlife, fresh and saltwater aquatic life and human resources. Reserve Officers educated the public on boating safety regulations and hunter education, handled nuisance wildlife complaints, as well as participated in training exercises and law enforcement patrol.

Volunteer interns gain valuable hands-on experience working with administrative staff and with officers in the field. They can participate in law enforcement details as well as provide needed assistance during criminal investigations.

- Students from Florida Gulf Coast University and the University of South Florida successfully completed internships with FWC Law Enforcement in Collier County.

"Reserve Officers contribute time, money and experience to ensure the citizens of Florida safely enjoy the natural resources and opportunities available to them. Their commitment to our agency is tireless."

–Captain Tom Haworth, FWC Division of Law Enforcement, Statewide Operations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Partnerships

FWC manages approximately 100 volunteer programs, with more than 4,000 volunteers annually. Many of these programs are successful due to partnerships. Partnerships are key because they strengthen relationships, provide access to areas beyond FWC boundaries, contribute programmatic, volunteer, financial or in-kind support, and provide a vehicle for implementing conservation issues throughout the state.

- FWC partners with more than 40 conservation agencies and organizations on citizen science and stewardship efforts that help the state of Florida achieve conservation goals. Partner highlights this year include a wide range of programmatic and financial support for species and habitat projects.
  - Florida Trail Association volunteers donated 1,855 hours to maintain sections of the Florida National Scenic Trail on FWC conservation lands.
  - FWC volunteers monitored and enhanced habitat for Red-cockaded woodpeckers within the Withlacoochee State Forest for the Florida Forest Service.
  - FWC volunteers continue to fight the ongoing battle to control invasive plants with many Florida State Parks in the central and south Florida regions.
  - FWC received a $500 Disney VoluntEars Grant which will be used to purchase field gear for the Ridge Rangers Volunteer Program.

Florida Trail Association

A hiker passes under Florida's turnpike on the Florida National Scenic Trail at Three Lakes WMA.

"Effective volunteer leaders are the 'keys' by which we unlock volunteer hands and minds."

–John M. Knibb, Business Journal contributor, Senior Vice President and a partner with Divaris Real Estate Inc., as well as President of Land Dev. Inc.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Jay Watch volunteers, along with FWC and partner staff, participate in Florida Scrub-Jay surveys in Lake County.

Partnerships

- FWC volunteers monitored gopher tortoise burrows for the Hernando County Environmentally Sensitive Lands. This monitoring event provided important gopher tortoise data and led to a habitat improvement grant for lands in the county.
- FWC volunteers monitored the Florida Scrub-jay for JayWatch, a partnership with Audubon that uses citizen science to better manage habitat for this species.
- FWC partnered with the USDA Forest Service, Region 8, National Forests in Florida to coordinate and conduct volunteer programs, in cooperation with the Ocala National Forest.
- The FWC Volunteer Program received a generous donation in memory of Lyall Leon Kingman, to support citizen science and stewardship projects that aim to conserve “wild” Florida.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Get Involved

Are you interested in:

- Becoming a conservation volunteer?
- Obtaining volunteers to help with your FWC program?

We welcome your help:

- Donate money or equipment to support FWC volunteer programs.
- Partner with FWC on current or new volunteer programs.

Contact:

Sharon Tatem
FWC Volunteer Program Manager
Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services
(850) 921-1047
Sharon.Tatem@MyFWC.com

Right: *Volunteers Jeanene Arrington-Fisher and BJ Quinton use a peeper scope to monitor kestrel nest activity during the breeding season.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Photos left to right: *Volunteers from the Online Fisherman host the Blooming Place for Kids summer fish camp at FWC's Stock Enhancement Research Facility; Volunteers post signs protecting Snail Kite nesting habitat on Lake Tohopekaliga in FWC's Northeast Region.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Volunteers plant wiregrass to enhance gopher tortoise habitat at Half Moon WMA on National Public Lands Day.

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