

Volunteer News

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FWC volunteers see “Red”

FWC volunteers support biologists’ Red-cockaded Woodpecker research

Spring is nesting season for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). During the nesting season, biologists – with the help of volunteers – count, band and monitor RCW populations to measure nesting success.

These rare birds are picky about their habitat – RCWs only nest in open stands of old-growth pine common in sandhill habitats, an upland ecosystem found in areas of the Florida Panhandle south to



—Photo by Mary Dowell

FWC volunteer Kim Chaney with newly banded RCW.

central Florida. Sandhill plant species include longleaf pine, turkey oak

and wiregrass. This ecosystem is becoming scarce in the Southeast due to development and lack of fire, which is required to maintain ecosystem health and productivity.

Even so, pockets of old-growth longleaf pine can be found throughout Florida’s Brooksville Ridge, an area stretching from Gilchrest south to Pasco County. The Division of Forestry and the FWC manage tracts like the Withlacoochee State Forest and Citrus Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to preserve habitats and support healthy populations of

RCWs and other wildlife species that depend on this ecosystem for survival. These public lands encompass approximately 50,000 acres and are home to more than 70 RCW families.

Monitoring is still underway for the 2010 breeding season. As of the end of June, biologists banded 98 nestlings on Citrus WMA. Biologists team up with volunteers to complete the banding, which occurs within 5 to 10 days of hatching and before nestlings leave the nest at 26 or 27 days of age. This year, the number of banded birds is the highest since banding began on Citrus WMA in 2001.

FWC volunteer Kim Chaney has been a part of this effort. According to Chaney, “Seeing a greater number of successful RCW nests has meant even more because I have personally invested time and effort in trying to help them succeed.”

In addition to banding and monitoring efforts, volunteers assist with clearing hardwood saplings and shrubs around RCW nest cavity trees so that prescribed fires do not damage the trees and nests. Prescribed fires are used as a habitat management tool to control hardwood trees and preserve the open landscape that RCWs and other species need in order to thrive. Volunteer Chaney notes, “The work can be physically



Photo by Myrna Erler-Bradshaw

Banded adult RCW.

demanding, but it is also rewarding. It’s been good to see our efforts in tree preparation pay off when RCW trees remain protected

during prescribed fires.”

A teamwork approach, combining efforts of multiple state and federal agencies and organizations, as well as the help of volunteers, is the most effective way to successfully monitor RCW populations. Before sunrise, at sunset, in the cool of winter or during the hot and busy breeding season, our volunteers are working to help.

Consider joining our team as a volunteer. For more information or to sign up as a volunteer, please contact the FWC Brooksville Ridge volunteer coordinator at 352-754-6722 or Mary Dowdell, FWC RCW biologist, at 352-754-6777, ext. 118 or at mary.dowdell@MyFWC.com.
– By Becky Brown, Mary Dowdell and Nancy Dwyer



Growing Up WILD in Florida

Help children learn about and understand nature

Project WILD is an interdisciplinary conservation and environmental education program emphasizing wildlife. This program depends on the expertise and commitment of volunteer instructors.

We've got something new for our volunteer teachers. Project WILD is offering a new wildlife education curriculum called Growing Up WILD. The Council for Environmental Education designed this curriculum addition to bring wildlife educational opportunities to early childhood educators and children ages 3-7.

Growing Up WILD seeks to foster a positive impact on



children's interactions with nature through promoting an understanding of wildlife, habitat and the role of humans in the natural world. The interdisciplinary curriculum covers a range of subject areas, including language arts, math, science, music and art, to help children learn

about and understand the natural world in which they live.

The FWC would like to encourage Project WILD volunteers to get trained in this exciting new curriculum so they can host Growing Up WILD workshops in their area. For more information, visit the Project WILD volunteer website at http://www.myfwc.com/LEARNING/Learn_Facilitator.htm or contact Lori Haynes, Project WILD coordinator, at 561-236-8431 or lori.haynes@MyFWC.com, or Beverly Eikeland, Project WILD assistant, at 850-488-4679 or beverly.eikeland@MyFWC.com.

– *By Beverly Eikeland*

Deepwater Horizon oil spill update

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and many other state and federal partners to minimize impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on Florida's wildlife and the fragile ecosystems that these fish and animals call home. FWC biologists and staff are conducting pre-impact wildlife and habitat assessments and monitoring shorelines for the presence of oil. To find out more about ongoing oil response efforts, visit the FWC's Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Response page at MyFWC.com/OilSpill/. Due to the hazardous nature of oil spill response efforts, volunteer opportunities are limited. Even so, there are ways in which you can help; volunteers are still needed for other oil spill-related tasks within local communities and organizations. For more information, visit Volunteer Florida's website at www.volunteerflorida.org.

Hard work recognized

FWC Ridge Rangers volunteers receive Davis Productivity Award for environmental successes

For dedication and commitment to excellence in achieving environmental successes, volunteers with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Ridge Rangers were recognized and awarded the Prudential-Davis Productivity plaque at a ceremony in Tampa on June 16. Receiving the award on behalf of the Ridge Rangers were Jim Reed, retired Ridge Rangers coordinator; Ridge Rangers volunteer Tom Culbertson; and Bill Parken, Ridge Rangers coordinator. Greg Holder, assistant executive director of the FWC, also attended the ceremony.

Prudential-Davis Productivity Awards are made possible through the generosity of Prudential, as anchor sponsor, and the vision of the late J.E. Davis and A.D. Davis,

co-founders of Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. and of Florida TaxWatch. Since 1989, the Prudential Davis Productivity Award program has publicly recognized and rewarded state employees and work units whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

Congratulations to the Ridge Rangers for receiving this recognition!

For more information, visit the Ridge Rangers website at www.MyFWC.com/RidgeRangers or contact Bill Parken, Ridge Rangers' coordinator, at 863-699-3742 or bill.parken@MyFWC.com.

– *By Bill Parken*

Black bears need your help

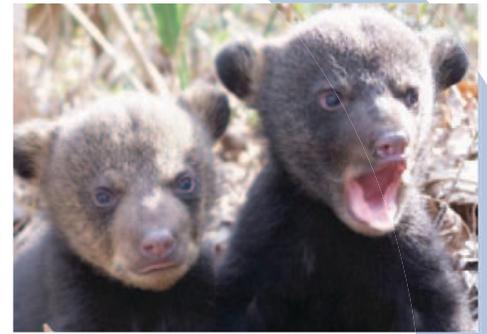
Join the bear management volunteer team in Northwest Florida

Human-bear conflicts are increasing in Florida as more and more people move into bear habitat. The key to reducing the number of conflicts (for example, bears raiding garbage cans or wildlife feeders, stealing pet food, and causing property damage) lies in Florida's residents adopting practices for living in bear country. Educating citizens about these practices is the key to success. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recently initiated a bear management volunteer program in Northwest Florida. Bear management program

volunteers assist with reducing human-bear conflicts in the following locations: Wakulla, Franklin and Gulf counties; Panama City Beach; Fort Walton Beach; Navarre; and Gulf Breeze.

Volunteer opportunities for the bear management program include: canvassing neighborhoods near bear habitat to distribute information on how to live in bear country; becoming a bear program presenter/educator; and building bear-proof garbage caddies for residents living in bear country.

For more information, visit the bear management volunteer



-Photo courtesy of FWC

program website at http://www.myfwc.com/GETINVOLVED/Volunteer_Bear.htm or contact Alan Knothe, wildlife assistance biologist, at 850-265-3676 or alan.knothe@MyFWC.com.

- By Alan Knothe

Help create the "Next Generation that Cares"

Volunteer at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center

The Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center, 20 miles east of Tallahassee, was created to introduce Florida's youth to shooting sports, fishing and the great outdoors. In March 2008, Beau Turner formed a partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)



-Photo by Adam Young, FWC

Two happy summer campers at BTYCC.

to open the center, which encompasses 160 acres that Turner leases at no cost to the FWC. The goal of the center is to develop a stewardship ethic among youth through programs designed to teach outdoor skills and instill an appreciation for and knowledge of the longleaf pine ecosystem and wildlife management techniques.

Through the help of dedicated volunteers, a wide variety of educational workshops, camps and trainings are offered at the center year round. Activities

include hunter safety courses, fishing seminars, youth hunts, birding events and much more. If you are interested in volunteering, visit the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center website at www.btycc.org or call 850-413-0084.

- By Tony Young



-Photo by Adam Young, FWC

Kenny Barker, director of the BTYCC (far right), with group of summer campers.