



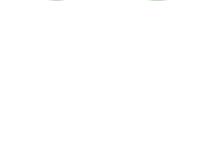
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THE NEWSLETTER OF FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE LEGACY INITIATIVE

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Winter 2015



What is FWLI?— A message from FWLI's new Program Leader

With a name like "Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative" (FWLI), folks commonly ask what exactly we are all about. We could recite our mission statement, or point to our 665 page [State Wildlife Action Plan](#), but that is often a bit too much for a typical elevator speech! Making it more complicated is the fact that we don't identify with a single species, habitat, system, or region of the state. By design, Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative works across many boundaries to enhance and integrate existing programs and coordinate critical conservation needs.

Our State Wildlife Action Plan is a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy for all of Florida. That's an enormous undertaking, and with limited resources, priorities have to be established. That's where our [five-year goals](#) come in to direct our primary funding source -[State Wildlife Grants](#). Currently we have set objectives in each of the major natural systems (terrestrial, freshwater and marine), as well as species data gaps, plan revision, monitoring, and climate adaptation.

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative is intended to be dynamic and adaptive. Revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan and our five-year goals provides opportunity for reflection, change, and fine-tuning of the approach. This is done with and alongside input from stakeholder, partners, and the public throughout the process. Thank you for your support! We look forward to building a lasting Wildlife Legacy with you.

-Brian Branciforte, *FWLI Program Leader*

The Faces of Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative Program

Since the last introduction to staff in the FWLI newsletter two years ago, a handful of staff shifted positions, and the program also gained a few new faces!

NEW! Florida State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator -

Please welcome **Allie Perryman** (picture on right) to FWLI as Florida's new State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator! Allie received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Florida State University, and has filled various roles within the FWC over the past 6 years. Most recently she served as the Local Government Coordinator for the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Program, where she worked with a wide variety of partners and college-level interns to enhance gopher tortoise conservation in Florida. Allie brings a wealth of knowledge and ambition given her background with species conservation, program coordination, outreach, facilitation, and partnership building. She will be located in Tallahassee with responsibilities statewide. You may reach her at Alexandra.Perryman@MyFWC.com.



Project ideas for the next SWG funding cycle?

All FWLI Goal Teams are currently exploring project ideas to put forth in the next funding cycle (project start date: July 2016). If you have project ideas to implement one of the [5 FWLI goals](#), please contact the appropriate Goal Lead:

[FWLI Contact Web page](#)



Brian Branciforte
FWLI Program Leader
(previously the Action Plan Coordinator)
Tallahassee



Andrea Alden
State Wildlife Grants Coordinator
(previously the Marine WLB)
Tallahassee

WLB = Wildlife Legacy Biologist



Jessica Graham
Northwest Region WLB, Panama City
Freshwater Goal Lead (Panhandle)



Ashley Ballou
NEW! North Central Region WLB, Lake City
Data Gaps Goal Lead



Mary Truglio
South Region WLB, West Palm Beach
Marine Goal Lead



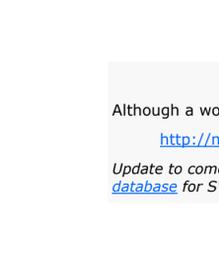
Heather Hitt
Northeast Region WLB, Vero Beach
Terrestrial Goal Lead



Robyn McDole
NEW! Assistant State Wildlife Grants Coordinator
Tallahassee



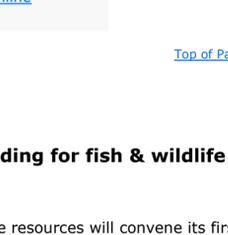
Whitney Gray
Sea Level Rise Coordinator, Tallahassee
Climate Change Objective Lead



Kevin Kemp
Southwest Region WLB, Lakeland
Freshwater Goal Lead (Peninsula)



Caroline Gorga
Species & Habitat Monitoring WLB
(previously the North Central Region/Data Gaps WLB)
St. Petersburg



Twanisha Presley
NEW! Scientific Engineering Programmer
SWG Data Manager
Tallahassee

FWLI Web page— Updated!

Although a work in progress, check out the new look so far!

<http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/>

Update to come in the next year: Improved searchable [online database](#) for SWG-funded projects

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New effort initiated to seek dedicated, sustainable funding for fish & wildlife

Caroline Gorga, *Wildlife Legacy Biologist*

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's diverse fish and wildlife resources will convene its first meeting on **March 24-25th** in Denver, Colorado. Organized by the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#) (AFWA), the panel is looking to "reimagine a 21st century model of funding conservation that bridges the funding gap between game and nongame species and secures a future for diverse fish and wildlife and the economy."

The Blue Ribbon Panel is co-chaired by **Dave Freudenthal**, former governor of Wyoming, and **John L. Morris**, Founder and CEO of Bass Pro Shops. The other 23 panelists represent the outdoor recreation retail and manufacturing sector, conservation organizations, sportsmen's groups, and the energy industry (see list below).

- Kevin Butt**—General Manager and Chief Environmental Officer, Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America, Inc. and Board Member, Wildlife Habitat Council
- Jeff Crane**—President, Congressional Sportsman's Foundation
- John Doerr**—President and CEO, Pure Fishing, Inc. and Board Member, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation
- Jim Faulstich**—Owner, Daybreak Ranch and Vice Chairman, Partners for Conservation
- John Fitzpatrick**—Director, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Co-inventor, eBird
- Greg Hill**—President and CEO of Exploration and Production, Hess Corporation
- Rebecca Humphries**—Chief Conservation Officer, National Wild Turkey Federation
- Dr. Stephen Kellert**—Professor Emeritus of Social Ecology and Senior Research Scholar, Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and Board Member, Bio-Logical Capital; Founding Partner, Environmental Capital Partners
- Jennifer Mull**—Chief Executive Officer, Backwoods Equipment, Inc. and Board Chair of the Outdoor Industry Association
- John W. Newman**—CFO and Treasurer, LLOG Exploration Company, LLC and Board Chairman, Ducks Unlimited
- Michael Nussman**—President and CEO, American Sportfishing Association
- Margaret O'Gorman**—President, Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) and Board Member, Stewardship Action Council
- Glenn Olson**—Donal O'Brien Chair in Bird Conservation and Public Policy, National Audubon Society (NAS) and Member, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Council and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Advisory Council
- Collin O'Mara**—President and CEO, National Wildlife Federation
- Connie Parker**—CEO and Founder, CS PARKER GROUP and Board Member, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and the Wildlife Foundation of Florida
- Charlie Potter**—CEO, Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and Founder and Chairman, Great Outdoors, LLC
- Steve Sanetti**—CEO, National Shooting Sports Foundation
- Lynn Scarlett**—Managing Director, Public Policy, The Nature Conservancy
- John Tomke**—President, Ducks Unlimited and Member, Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council
- Jeff Trandahl**—CEO, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Dr. James Walker**—Vice Chairman of the Board, EDF Renewable Energy and Board Member, American Wind Energy Association
- Dr. Steve Williams**—President, Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) and Board President, National Conservation Leadership Institute; Board Member, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Bob Ziehmer**—Director, Missouri Department of Conservation

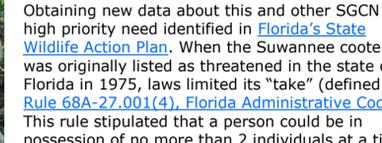


[Burrowing owl](#) - one of Florida's 60 state-listed species
Courtesy of Patrick Delaney, FWC

Over the past three decades, the conservation community has worked tirelessly to secure dedicated funding for imperiled species and their habitats, but all attempts have been unsuccessful (see [AFWA's White Paper on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources](#)). In 2001, Congress authorized the development of the [State Wildlife Grant Program](#) to fund conservation actions that would prevent new endangered species listings. Although this funding source is annually apportioned (and therefore never guaranteed from year to year), each state and U.S. territory has used the funds to create and implement their State Wildlife Action Plans (Action Plan). For success stories, see [AFWA's State Wildlife Grants Success Stories Report](#).

Recently, the number of petitions for federal endangered species listing increased by 1,000%, and the State Wildlife Grant Program has been cut by 35%. The Blue Ribbon Panel will spend 2015 identifying both Congressional policy options and funding opportunities to conserve all fish and wildlife.

For more information about the Blue Ribbon Panel, please visit <http://teaming.com/blue-ribbon-panel-sustaining-americas-diverse-fish-wildlife-resources>. For Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan and State Wildlife Grants program, please visit <http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/>.



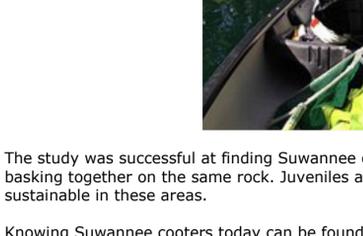
TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE
a natural investment

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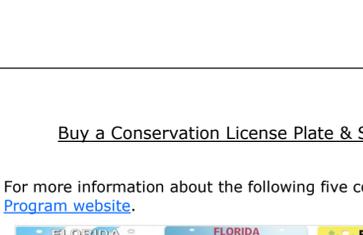
Encountering and counting Suwannee cooters

Ashley Ballou, *Wildlife Legacy Biologist*
Anna Deyle, *Assistant Regional Species Conservation Biologist, Northeast Region*

It has been decades since the [Suwannee cooter](#) has been officially documented in some areas of Florida, with the last survey of this species in the Weeki Wachee River dating back to 1952 and the last sightings in the Crystal River recorded in 1928.



Juvenile Suwannee cooter basking on a log in Crystal River, FL
Courtesy of Ashley Ballou, FWC



Peninsular cooter, Suwannee cooter and Florida red-bellied cooter basking together on a log in the Weeki Wachee River, FL
Courtesy of Karen Parker, FWC

Ashley Ballou and Anna Deyle, biologists with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), updated the information about this species during the summer and fall of 2014. The Suwannee cooter is a species scheduled to be removed from Florida's imperiled species list, but will remain protected under the [Suwannee Cooter Species Action Plan](#) (a part of the agency's newly drafted [Imperiled Species Management Plan](#)).

The Suwannee cooter inhabits Florida rivers draining into the Gulf of Mexico ranging from the Ochlocknee River in the central Panhandle to the Alafia River, as well as river-associated habitats such as impoundments. This subspecies (*Pseudemys concinna suwanniensis*) of the river cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*) has several designations: a [Species of Greatest Conservation Need](#) (SGCN) in Florida and currently a Species of Special Concern on the [State's Threatened and Endangered Species list](#).

Obtaining new data about this and other SGCN is a high priority need identified in [Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan](#). When the Suwannee cooter was originally listed as threatened in the state of Florida in 1975, laws limited its "take" (defined in [Rule 68A-27.001\(4\), Florida Administrative Code](#)).

This rule stipulated that a person could be in possession of no more than 2 individuals at a time outside of the principal nesting season (15 April to 31 July). In 2009, the FWC changed the rule, prohibiting all take of river cooters; however, there is evidence that large numbers of these turtles are being harvested illegally. Other threats to this species are pollution, predation, impacts related to motor boating and habitat alteration such as impoundments, channel dredging and snag removal.

The FWC biologists addressed a specific action within the Suwannee Cooter Species Action Plan: survey the Weeki Wachee and Crystal rivers to see if they contained populations. Armed with binoculars, staff paddled kayaks down rivers, from August to October 2014, searching for cooters on banks and other basking locations. Everywhere a turtle was spotted, researchers recorded the GPS location and information such as the turtle's sex and age class.

Right: Ashley Ballou and Anna Deyle, FWC biologists, take photos of a Suwannee cooter.
Courtesy of Brooke Talley, FWC



The study was successful at finding Suwannee cooters in both rivers, with one case of eight turtles basking together on the same rock. Juveniles also were identified, a sign that the population may be sustainable in these areas.

Knowing Suwannee cooters today can be found swimming along the Weeki Wachee and Crystal rivers, FWC biologists are now ready to focus on the next steps of making sure these turtles continue to thrive there.

For more photos on MyFWC's Flickr site: "[Suwannee Turtle Survey](#)"

For more information on conservation measures for freshwater turtles: <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/freshwater-turtles/>

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Buy a Conservation License Plate & Show Your Support for Florida's Wildlife!

For more information about the following five conservation license plates, please visit the [BuyAPlate Program website](#).

Left to Right: [Conserve Wildlife](#) (FWC), [Go Fishing](#) (FWC), [Helping Sea Turtles Survive](#) (FWC & the Sea Turtle Conservancy), [Protect the Panther](#) (FWC), & [Save the Manatee](#) (FWC)

The BuyAPlate Program is managed for the FWC by the [Wildlife Foundation of Florida](#).

Share how you are implementing the State Wildlife Action Plan!

To share how you are implementing Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan in Legacy's Newsletter, please contact [Caroline Gorga](#).

If you are not currently receiving FWLI's e-mails, please [sign up!](#)

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