



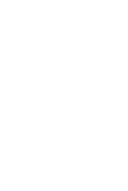
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## THE NEWSLETTER OF FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE LEGACY INITIATIVE

Winter 2014

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### The Crossroads of Hope - Citizen Science Volunteers & the Southeastern American Kestrel

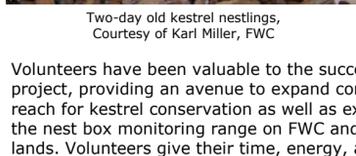
**Joe Murphy, Chisegut Volunteer Coordinator**  
**Karl Miller, Upland Nongame Bird Lead, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute**  
**Sharon Tatem, Volunteer Program Manager**  
**Anne Glick, Office of Public Access & Wildlife Viewing Section Leader**

In the longleaf pine forests of Florida's Brooksville Ridge, which stretch from Pasco County north to Levy County, the patient birdwatcher can be rewarded with one of nature's wonders, the [Southeastern American Kestrel](#). The Southeastern American Kestrel, the smallest falcon in the United States, is a non-migratory resident in Florida. Although this [Species of Greatest Conservation Need](#) is in decline, a united effort, led by the staff and volunteers of the [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#) (FWC), has created hope that strong stewardship can make the Southeastern American Kestrel's story one of success.



Southeastern American Kestrel, Courtesy of Jack Rogers

For the kestrel, it is all about the trees. Kestrels nest in tree cavities that they do not excavate. Instead, they rely on woodpeckers and natural processes to create holes in trees. Kestrels nest predominantly in dead, but standing pine trees, called [snags](#). Snags are rare in today's woods, but land managers and biologists are working hard to restore longleaf pine forests to a natural, healthy condition. This is a true long-term management solution for kestrels and future generations of Floridians. However, a more immediate need is uniting biologists, land managers and the public in a real-time effort to help the kestrel.



Two-day old kestrel nestlings, Courtesy of Karl Miller, FWC

Volunteers are currently working with FWC and partner staff to install, maintain and monitor kestrel nest boxes. [Nest boxes](#), mounted on trees in areas of preferred habitat, provide kestrels with a usable site for nesting, to bridge the gap until nature can, again, provide suitable habitat. In 2013, teams of FWC volunteers managed 24 kestrel nest boxes on FWC and partner lands in the Brooksville Ridge region. Volunteers also monitored 18 nest boxes on five conservation areas in Marion, Sumter and Citrus counties. Volunteers became familiar with mating pairs of kestrels and their chicks, welcoming a new generation of kestrels into the world.

Volunteers have been valuable to the success of this project, providing an avenue to expand community reach for kestrel conservation as well as expanding the nest box monitoring range on FWC and partner lands. Volunteers give their time, energy, and passion to ensure future generations will know the wonder of seeing a kestrel in flight among the pines. This citizen science effort reflects the hard and amazing work of professionals and volunteers to protect wildlife and habitats across Florida.



Left: Volunteers use a "peeper scope" to monitor kestrel nestlings, Courtesy of FWC; Right: Volunteer performing maintenance on a kestrel box, Courtesy of FWC

For more information about the kestrel nest box effort or to learn more about other [volunteer opportunities](#), please contact [Sharon Tatem](#), the FWC Volunteer Program Manager (850-921-1047).

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### Corridor Planning & Awareness in Florida

**Brian Branciforte, Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator**

The concept of ecological corridors is not new in Florida, and significant work has been accomplished on the topic since the 1980's. As demonstrated by the [Florida Ecological Greenways Network](#) and the [Florida Greenways and Trails Act](#), corridors not only help wildlife, but also have significant roles in advancing Florida's economy, tourism, health, transportation, recreation, conservation and quality of life.



Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area, Courtesy of FWC

Florida has a wealth of scientific data to inform such work-from aerial photographs, Geographic Information System (GIS) data and maps, to large ranging wildlife telemetry data with bear and panther. Most recently the [Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project](#) (CLIP) has fully integrated sets of GIS data layers of priority statewide conservation areas, working landscapes and development areas. The CLIP uses science and the best statewide spatial data to identify Florida's critical environmental resources in a database that can be used as decision-support tool for collaborative statewide and regional conservation and land-use planning. The FWC uses the CLIP for the basis of the [Cooperative Conservation Blueprint](#) - a process that has brought together landowners, businesses, governmental and conservation organizations to collectively build broad agreement on both voluntary and non-regulatory conservation incentives along with a comprehensive vision of wildlife habitat and connectivity priorities to which existing and new incentive ideas can be applied.



The Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition Route Map, Original Watercolor by Mike Reagan

Another recent effort is the [Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition](#) - which has the goal to increase public awareness around natural landscape connectivity through a broad-reaching media campaign. The centerpiece of the effort was a 1000 mile trek over a 100 day period across the peninsula of Florida in 2012. The Expedition was highly successful and resulted in a documentary of the effort, multiple news outlets picking up the story, and even special recognition by the Governor and Cabinet through a resolution. In 2014, the Expedition team is planning a series of 'mini expeditions' to engage youth, and another longer expedition that will traverse from central Florida across the panhandle to raise awareness in that region of Florida.

For more information about CLIP or the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, please contact [Brian Branciforte](#). To learn more about the Florida Wildlife Corridor and the Expedition, please visit [www.floridawildlifecorridor.org](#).

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### Progress of the Peninsular Florida LCC

**Kate Haley Parsons, PFLCC Science Coordinator & Administrator of Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative**



Peninsular Florida LCC Area

The [Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative](#) (PFLCC) was created to address landscape scale stressors including climate change, urbanization, energy development, water resource issues and exotic species. The cumulative effects of these stressors underline the need to develop prospective science to allow for conservation of natural and cultural resources and functional landscapes into the future. The PFLCC focuses on science that will enable natural and cultural resource managers to evaluate predicted impacts of change induced by these stressors and develop techniques to enhance ecosystem resiliency.

The current science projects of the PFLCC investigate a number of possible trajectories of future landscape transformation through development of scenarios. The scenarios include four main drivers of change: climate change, shifts in planning approaches and regulations, population change, and variations in financial resources, while incorporating the latest updates to statewide conservation priorities via the [Critical Lands and Water Identification Project](#) (CLIP) dataset. Scenarios are conceived not as blueprints for the future, but rather as learning tools for managing uncertainty. Three future time horizons were simulated for each scenario: 2020, 2040 and 2060. Each alternative future visualizes land use patterns and landscape transformations such as coastal inundation, urbanization, and infrastructure changes. Future changes in conservation lands are modeled and/or designed based on the input from local experts and managers and using the best available ecological information and data. Progress of these science projects will be posted on the PFLCC web site soon. Stay tuned!

For more information about the PFLCC, please visit <http://peninsularfloralcc.org/>.

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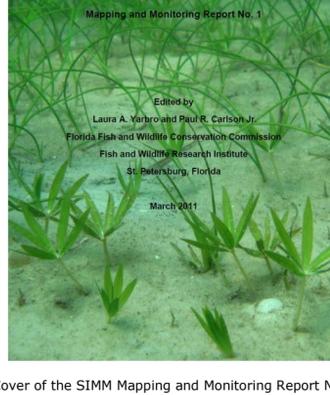
### Goal Post: Seagrass Serendipity

**Andrea Alden, Marine Wildlife Legacy Biologist**

Our [2012-2017 FWLI Marine Implementation Goal](#) is focused on coral conservation and restoration, but we haven't forgotten about Florida's successes in seagrass habitat conservation, mapping and monitoring! From 2006-2011 State Wildlife Grants (SWG) supported [multiple seagrass habitat-related projects](#) that focused on issues ranging from the impacts of water quality and prop scars to more efficient and cost-effective mapping and research on biodiversity in seagrass habitat.

One important SWG project, led by Paul Carlson and Laura Yarbro of FWC, gathered and collated information from seagrass managers and scientists from all over the state. They evaluated and compared the various sampling methods used by partners in an effort to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of common sampling designs and to determine best practices for characterizing status and trends of seagrass in Florida. This data and subsequent analyses provided information for the [Seagrass Integrated Mapping and Monitoring \(SIMM\) program](#).

The SIMM program is a loose association of dozens of scientists and managers who are willing to evaluate, summarize, and share their data on seagrass status and trends in their study areas for a statewide reporting effort. The first publication of this statewide reporting effort, [Seagrass Integrated Mapping and Monitoring for the State of Florida: Mapping and Monitoring Report No. 1](#), was completed in 2011 (click on the cover below).



Cover of the SIMM Mapping and Monitoring Report No. 1

The importance of SIMM and associated projects was highlighted after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. The SIMM program put Florida in the unique position of possessing statewide, compiled pre-spill data on an environmentally important habitat. This enabled Florida to quickly provide the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#) (NRDA) staff with data pertaining to seagrass resources in the Panhandle counties potentially affected by the oil spill.

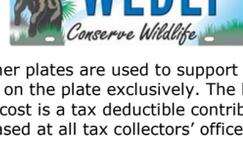
Under an agreement with NRDA trustees, BP agreed to pay up to \$1 billion in [early restoration projects](#). Those projects were initiated for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in April 2011. A [draft of the third round of NRDA early restoration projects](#) was announced in December 2013 and includes a Florida Seagrass Recovery Project that would include restoration work in St. Joseph Bay, Alligator Harbor, and St. Andrews Bay.

For more information about this project or Legacy's Marine Goal, please contact [Andrea Alden](#). For more information about the restoration of the Gulf Coast following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, please visit [www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/](http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/).

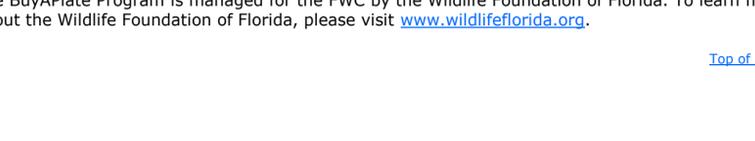
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### Buy a Conservation License Plate & Show Your Support for Florida's Wildlife!

When you purchase one of the five conservation license plates shown here, every dollar goes to support the efforts of [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#) (FWC). The [Wildlife](#) plate to provide assistance to a variety of programs and initiatives, such as species and habitat research, watchable wildlife initiatives, education programs about Florida's diverse wildlife, law enforcement, and programs that encourage conservation of Florida's natural heritage. Revenues are also used to increase public awareness and understanding, especially among children, about the importance of wildlife and wildlife habitat, and to encourage participation in wildlife-viewing activities.



The funds raised by each of the other plates are used to support programs that benefit the species and/or conservation area indicated on the plate exclusively. The license plates cost \$25 more than a standard plate, and this additional cost is a tax deductible contribution to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida. These plates can be purchased at all tax collectors' offices or online at <http://www.buyaplate.com/>.



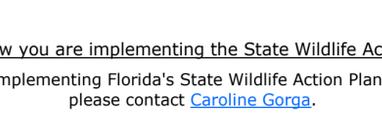
Left to Right: [Go Fishing](#), [Helping Sea Turtles Survive](#), [Protect the Panther](#), & [Save the Manatee](#)

The BuyAPlate Program is managed for the FWC by the Wildlife Foundation of Florida. To learn more about the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, please visit [www.wildlifeflorida.org](http://www.wildlifeflorida.org).

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### Coalition on a Mission: Teaming With Wildlife

Florida's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition currently numbers over 200 members. You can join our efforts and help secure long-term dedicated funding for Florida's wildlife conservation and related education and recreation: [Sign up and learn more about Florida's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition!](#)



You can help!

Join the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition!

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### 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!](#)