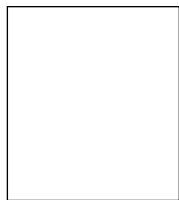




P.O. Box 11010
Tallahassee, FL 32302



NATURE MATTERS

FISH & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF FLORIDA

In the fiscal year that just ended, the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida distributed a record \$9.2 million for conservation and youth outdoor education projects around the state. Thank you for helping make this possible!



Proud Citizen Support Organization for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge • BACK IMAGE: Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

The Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida is a nonprofit organization that seeks to protect our outstanding animals and plants and the lands and waters they need to survive.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Andrew Walker, President & CEO

It's a tough time to be in conservation. Orange skies and unhealthy air plagued the eastern United States this summer as millions of acres of Canada's usually cool, moist boreal forests burned. As I'm writing this, more than 100 people were killed by fast-moving fires on drought-stricken Maui and many are still missing. Water temperatures in the Florida Keys reached an unimaginable 101 degrees in late July. So quickly were corals being killed many didn't have time to "bleach"—expelling the color- and life-giving algae that live within them—in reaction to heat stress. And massive coral die-offs and landscape-scale fires weren't confined to North America, but were being experienced on every continent and ocean except Antarctica.

Climate scientists say this is a taste of what's to come as the world more and more frequently passes the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold beyond, which the chances of extreme flooding, drought, wildfires, and food shortages would increase dramatically.

Conservation may be a rear-guard action these days, but it's not a hopeless one.

Climate change is reversible. It will take many decades of genuine global cooperation, but it can be done. The wholesale loss of habitats to climate change and other threats will also take a very long time to correct, but is also ultimately reversible. For species, of course, there is no second chance: once gone, forever gone.

In the course of my career, the emphasis in conservation has shifted from proactively protecting wonderful natural areas to coping with crises. The problems Florida has faced in the past two decades – harmful algal blooms, invasive species, wildlife diseases, coral bleaching, rising sea levels – are happening virtually everywhere.

If you're about to reach for the Xanax – don't. Conservation may be a rear-guard action these days, but it's not a hopeless one. Florida has been a leader in accepting our present reality and doing something about it, with billions of dollars invested in water quality, restoring the Everglades, rescuing corals, combatting invasive species, planning for rising sea levels, and managing our wildlife for long-term sustainability and survival.

As severe as the global coral die-off has been in the past few months, scientists in Florida were prepared. More than 18,000 corals were temporarily moved out of the ocean into federal, state, and private holding facilities. As you read this, scientists are surveying the reef, collecting samples of surviving corals that may be resistant to heat. They can be tested quickly and inexpensively in the field thanks to Stanford University scientists who have created a portable heat-stress lab using items that can be purchased at Target and your local pet and homebrew stores.

In 1989 Bill McKibben published *The End of Nature*, the first general audience book to deal in depth with climate change (though I recall learning about the "greenhouse effect" 20 years earlier in the third grade). McKibben describes nature as a force previously independent of human beings but now directly affected by the actions of people:

"If the waves crash up against the beach, eroding dunes and destroying homes, it is not the awesome power of Mother Nature. It is the awesome power of Mother Nature as altered by the awesome power of man, who has overpowered in a century the processes that have been slowly evolving and changing of their own accord since the earth was born."

- Bill McKibben, Author of *The End of Nature*

McKibben offers two paths forward, "The Defiant Reflex" or a "more humble" way of living.

As parents, we teach our children to anticipate and accept the consequences of their actions. It's much harder when those actions are vast socio-economic and political forces whose inertia carries us along as we're born into this world. But that is the task in front of us. And a little defiance of the apparent odds, and a little humility about how we got here, will serve us all well.

As we deal with the consequences of humanity's past and present acts, as we work to save species from extinction and restore their habitats, as we read dire headlines, let's not forget to look outside. It's still a beautiful world that we increasingly know how to conserve. We love what we know. So let's go for a walk in nature and take a child with us.

To our future,

Andrew Walker,
President & CEO

BABY CORALS

BIG HOPE

As noted in our CEO message, it's been a bleak summer for Florida's Coral Reef. Historically high water temperatures more common in hot tubs than the ocean. Entire reefs lost, including large, previously resilient founder corals. Responders scrambling to rescue as many corals from the water as possible, removing entire restoration sites.

But there are still moments of hope. Aquarists from around the country have headed down to the Florida Keys to care for the rescued corals, with travel funded by our Foundation. And we're overjoyed to announce the arrival of thousands of baby corals! Born recently at the Florida Coral Rescue Center (FCRC) in Orlando, these star, rough cactus, grooved brain, and spiny flower corals are an essential part of the future of Florida. Even more remarkable, some of the corals at the FCRC reproduced for only the second documented time in human care.

One of the humans making this possible is Coral Biologist Midori Mendoza. She and her SeaWorld Orlando colleagues work around the clock during the birth, with spawning typically happening in the middle of the night. They hustle to transfer the babies onto cement tiles for them to attach and grow, often with simple tools like turkey basters and plastic takeout containers. Once the baby corals have settled, they feed and monitor them, ensuring ideal water salinity and temperature. Their work is not only creating new corals, it's also advancing the knowledge of coral care.

"The spawning at the center offers hope for the recovery of corals in the Florida Keys amid events like coral bleaching caused by high temperatures," said Midori.

"Our efforts to spawn and propagate corals could contribute to the restoration of damaged reefs and showcases our ability to foster coral health and successful spawning."

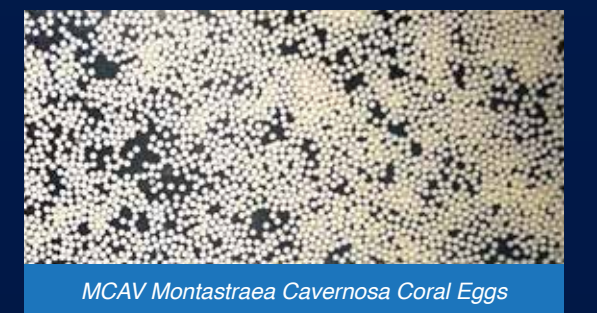
In addition to helping birth new babies, Midori and the rest of the SeaWorld team of aquarists care for FCRC's nearly 700 adult corals, which represent 18 of the Florida reef's stony coral species, some of which are classified as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. These corals were rescued by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) scientists in 2019 and 2020 as stony coral tissue loss disease approached the lower Florida Keys.

SeaWorld, in partnership with NOAA, FWC, and our Foundation, opened a public-facing Coral Rescue Center in its Orlando park in mid-June. The part-exhibition, part-coral kindergarten is an extension of the work being done at FCRC, which is funded by Disney Conservation and our Foundation while SeaWorld scientists work pro bono. SeaWorld's newest roller coaster, "Pipeline: The Surf Coaster," also opened this spring. Guests waiting in line are greeted by colorful signage explaining stony coral tissue loss disease and how our Foundation, FWC, and others are working to preserve and restore our reef.

SeaWorld's coral rescue exhibit creates much-needed space as FCRC corals grow and spawn. Longer term, FWC and our Foundation are seeking to raise \$4.8 million in private and public funds to double the size of FCRC and turn it into Florida's largest coral propagation center in cooperation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Disney Conservation, Tampa's Florida Aquarium, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and NOAA. We've also launched a Freedom to Fail coral grant in partnership with NOAA, funded by a generous donation. The winning projects, totaling nearly \$80,000 in research, are working to understand best practices for replanting in these challenging conditions. So when the time is right, the coral babies are in the best position to grow and thrive.

Thanks to such partnerships and the around-the-clock work of aquarists like Midori, spawning at FCRC is literally creating the future of Florida's Coral Reef. Over time, these corals will be cross-bred to maximize their genetic diversity and resistance to disease and higher ocean temperatures. This is just the start of their journey—and ours—to rebuild our reefs. **We still need your help raising the baby corals.**

Welcome baby corals into the world by donating today.



MCAV *Montastraea Caverosa* Coral Eggs

MEET A FOUNDATION CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR

BRANDON THOMPSON,
NEW SMYRNA BEACH


Before he was an accomplished hunter and angler, Brandon Thompson had no one to show him the ropes. But something pulled him outdoors anyway.

“It was something in me that just gravitated toward nature and being outside,” said Brandon. “I was seven or eight when I first started fishing. It was nothing complicated, just simply putting a piece of bait on and trying to catch a fish.”

Today, Brandon is using his years of expertise to encourage communities of color and younger generations to experience all wild Florida has to offer. Alongside his best friend Odie, a two-year-old chocolate lab who Brandon trained as a retrieving bird dog, Brandon posts motivational and educational hunting and fishing content to his social media platforms. Over the course of his last birding season, Odie successfully retrieved a total of 99 birds.

“I don’t really have a goal for him this season. Our off-season was focused on training like usual, so I have no expectations,” said Brandon. “Just to have fun with my boy and enjoy the season while it lasts.”

To round out his outdoor recreation repertoire, he’s recently entered the particularly skilled world of fly fishing, but still plans to be out with Odie for the dove season opener.

 @eazylivin11

JOIN BRANDON THIS FALL FOR DEER HUNTING SEASON. ACCESS TO WILD FLORIDA IS FOR ALL.

ANTLERED DEER

Antler regulations vary by deer management unit.

ZONE A

- Muzzleloading gun season: Sept. 2 – 15
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Sept. 9 – 10
- General gun season: Sept. 16 – Oct. 15, Nov. 18 – Jan. 7

ZONE B

- Archery season: Oct. 14 – Nov. 12
- Crossbow season: Oct. 14 – Nov. 17
- Muzzleloading gun season: Nov. 18 – Dec. 1
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Nov. 25 – 26
- General gun season: Dec. 2 – Feb. 18

ZONE C

- Archery season: Sept. 16 – Oct. 15
- Crossbow season: Sept. 16 – Oct. 20
- Muzzleloading gun season: Oct. 21 – Nov. 3
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Oct. 28 – 29
- General gun season: Nov. 4 – Jan. 21

ZONE D

- Archery season: Oct. 21 – Nov. 22
- Crossbow season: Oct. 21 – Nov. 22, Nov. 27 – Dec. 1
- Muzzleloading gun season: Dec. 2 – 8
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Dec. 2 – 3
- General gun season: Nov. 23 – 26, Dec. 9 – Feb. 18

ANTLERLESS DEER

Deer (except spotted fawn) without antlers or antlers less than 5 inches

ZONE A

- Youth deer hunt weekend: DMU A2/A3: Sept. 9 – 10
- General gun season:
DMU A2: Nov. 18 – 19
DMU A3: Nov. 18 – 21

ZONE B

- Archery | Crossbow season: Oct. 14 – Nov. 12
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Nov. 25 – 26
- General gun season: Dec. 29 – 31

ZONE C

- Archery | Crossbow seasons: Sept. 16 – Oct. 15
- Muzzleloading gun season: DMU C5: Oct. 21 – 22
- Youth deer hunt weekend: Oct. 28 – 29
- General gun season:
DMU C2/C3: Nov. 17 – 19
DMU C1/C4/C6: Nov. 17 – 20
DMU C5: Nov. 4 – 5, Nov. 18 – 19

ZONE D

- Archery | Crossbow seasons: Oct. 21 – Nov. 22
- Muzzleloading gun season | Youth deer hunt weekend: DMU D2: Dec. 2 – 3
- General gun season:
DMU D1: Nov. 25 – 26, Dec. 30 – 31
DMU D2: Nov. 25 – 26, Dec. 16 – 17, Dec. 30 – 31



Female white-tail deer

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CWD

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a neurological disorder that affects white-tail deer and other members of the deer family. On June 15th, FWC announced that CWD had unfortunately been found in Florida. Thanks to FWC’s robust CWD monitoring program, a sample taken from a road-killed deer in Holmes County has tested positive for the disease. The sample was taken as part of routine monitoring. Our Foundation provided funding for the monitoring program, in addition to CWD awareness campaigns, through our Wildlife Foundation of Florida tag grants.

CWD is highly contagious and can spread among deer through direct contact with bodily fluids, contaminated environments, and even through ingestion of contaminated plants or soil. Infected animals experience weight loss, behavioral changes, and

physical deterioration. CWD also reduces their ability to evade predators and impacts their overall reproductive success. The disease is always fatal. As a result, affected populations may face declines in numbers, decreased genetic diversity, and potential long-term implications for the ecosystem as a whole. Currently, there is no scientific evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans or livestock under natural conditions.

Hunters can support FWC’s efforts to monitor Florida deer for CWD by voluntarily submitting their deer heads for testing (skull cap and antlers can be removed and kept by the hunter). Anyone who sees a sick or abnormally thin deer or deer dead of unknown causes is asked to report its location to the CWD hotline, **(866) CWD-WATCH (293-9282)**.

SPRING INTO FLORIDA SPRINGS

PHOTOS BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
EXPLORER JASON GULLEY



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the hundreds of individuals and foundations who helped us and FWC feed hundreds of manatees last winter in the Indian River Lagoon. We bought 380,000 pounds of lettuce with your gifts. Thanks also to DUDA who offered the lettuce at a greatly reduced cost!

The feeding was an emergency response. We're also funding long-term solutions with your donations, like habitat restoration in the Lagoon with partner Sea & Shoreline. Pictured are a mother manatee and calf in Crystal River, a shining example of this type of restoration.

PROTECT FLORIDA SPRINGS

Buy your plate today!





ASK GORDON!

WANT TO GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED? Gordon L. Nelson, CPA, CFP® is the Foundation's Planned Giving Specialist. Write him at gnelson@wildlifeflorida.org or call him at 435.213.9986.



Dear Gordon,

I'm retired and I've always been passionate about Florida wildlife, especially manatees. I don't have a large income, but I'd love to contribute to conservation in a meaningful way. How?

Mad for Manatees, *Dunedin, FL*

Dear Mad for Manatees,

Planned giving, also known as gift planning or legacy giving, can be a profound and meaningful way for individuals to support the causes they hold dear, like Florida's manatees. It can often enable you to give more than your current income might allow, creating a greater impact.

Simply put, a planned gift is a contribution that you commit to during your lifetime or upon your death as part of your overall financial or estate plan. It can take various forms, including stocks, bonds, mutual funds, life insurance, retirement accounts, real estate, personal property, business interests, or even cash. This stands in contrast to regular donations to annual funds or membership dues.

Planned giving is particularly compelling because of the potential benefits it offers you, even without a large income. Some planned gifts can provide donors with a lifelong income and could even increase their overall income. And it serves as a crucial aspect in supporting the mission of organizations, like the Foundation's work replanting eelgrass in the Indian River Lagoon for manatees and other wildlife.

LET'S TOUCH ON THREE POPULAR TYPES OF PLANNED GIFTS TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF YOUR OPTIONS:

1. Gifts through a will or trust, known as a bequest, can be a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or even specific assets.
2. Beneficiary designations are quite popular. They involve giving all or a portion of Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), accounts, annuities, and life insurance to beneficiaries that you've chosen. This option is appealing as it costs nothing to implement, is simple, and is very tax-smart. Retirement assets will be taxed to individuals that inherit them, but non-profit organizations do not pay tax on money received through this type of gift.
3. Lastly, there's the Charitable Gift Annuity. Here, a donor gives cash or appreciated assets in exchange for a guaranteed income for life, with the remaining funds going to a chosen charity upon the donor's death.

As you can see, planned giving provides an array of opportunities for individuals to create a lasting legacy that benefits not just themselves, but also the causes they care about, like your beloved manatees. For more information, visit wildlifeflorida.org or feel free to set up a confidential conversation with me. There's a world of possibility in planned giving, and I'd love to help you explore it.

Best,
Gordon L. Nelson, CPA, CFP®
Planned Giving Specialist, Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida



TOP IMAGE: A diver in Rainbow Springs, where we funded an ecological assessment of the spring and its use via the Protect Florida Springs license plate
BOTTOM IMAGE: A volunteer cleans the bottom of Silver Spring's famous glassbottom boat. We helped fund the purchase of a wheelchair accessible boat via the springs plate.

DONORS

THANK YOU TO ALL THE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO DONATED FROM JANUARY 1ST, 2023 THROUGH AUGUST 15TH, 2023.

Hammerhead Shark Society (\$100,000+)

Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's Outdoor Fund**
The Estate of Ms. Joy A. Best
Contender Boats**
Informa Markets
Mrs. Connie & Mr. Garner Koons
Mrs. Daphne & Mr. C. Martin Wood III**

Florida Black Bear Crew (\$50,000-\$99,999)

The Garcia Companies**
Pike Electric**
Pollinator Fund
Seminole Tribe of Florida**
Mrs. Sonia & Mr. Paul Tudor Jones II**

Manatee League (\$25,000-\$49,999)

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** A Night for Nature sponsor

DONOR PROFILE

ASHLEY'S LOVE LETTER TO FLORIDA, FROM CAPITOL HILL



Boca Ciega Bay native Ashley Patterson Beaty grew up on the water, instilling a commitment to wild Florida despite living over 800 miles away.

Ashley attended Admiral Farragut Academy in St. Petersburg. With its 40-acre waterfront campus, it's no wonder the academy hosts a variety of aquatic curricula, including hands-on marine sciences, naval science, and SCUBA, fostering Ashley's love of Florida's marine ecosystems.

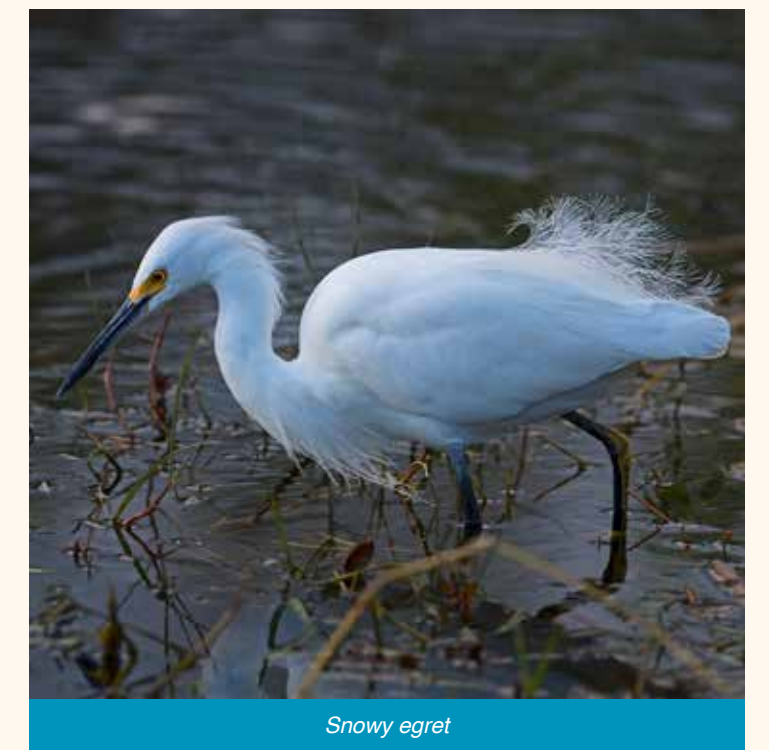
Today, Ashley works in Washington, D.C. as the Principal of Ardeidae Group, an organization she founded to advocate and consult on behalf of clean technology and energy businesses and policies. Ardeidae refers to the family of 60 genus species of wading birds found in coastal and inland wetland areas where she grew up, including the great blue heron and the snowy egret. She contributes a portion of the company's fees to support our Foundation's mission to conserve marine mammals, like the iconic Florida manatee.

“When you move out of Florida, it never really leaves you,” said Ashley, who often returns to the Palm Beach and Tampa Bay areas.

In addition to supporting environmentally positive policy with movers and shakers on the Hill, Ashley is also the first female Board Chair on her alma mater's Board of Directors. While she has no children of her own, she cherishes the school's 450 students and remains heavily involved in the school's success in shaping the leadership of Florida's future.



Great blue heron



Snowy egret