

# ENVIRONMENTAL TIMES

Volume 11 Issue 3

Published by the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management

Fall 2006

## CONTENTS



**PAGE 2**  
Sculptures unveiled at Hypoluxo Scrub



**PAGE 3**  
Endangered plant gets help from local students



**PAGE 4**  
Prescribed burn at Royal Palm Beach Pines



**PAGE 5**  
Pine Glades habitat restoration project



**PAGE 6**  
Native firebush vs. non-native firebush



**PAGE 7**  
Volunteers in action at Limestone Creek

## ENJOY NATURE BY BOAT

### Ocean Ridge Natural Area Soon to Open for Business as Department's First Boater-Friendly South County Natural Area

The Ocean Ridge Natural Area (12.35 acres) is part of a 25 acre nature preserve located approximately 0.4 miles south of the Ocean Avenue Bridge along the Intracoastal Waterway and Lake Worth Lagoon in Ocean Ridge. Restoration projects at the Ocean Ridge Natural Area increased tidal flow to 5 acres of existing mangroves and built 4.5 acres of mangrove and open water areas, jetties, and

maritime hammock uplands. The 2 acres of created wetland area was planted with approximately 9,000 red mangrove seedlings, 2,000 smooth cordgrass sprigs, and other salt-tolerant native vegetation. The half acre of maritime hammock was planted with approximately 1,000 trees and shrubs, and 4,000 grasses and upland plants. The public use facilities consist of a two-story observation platform, an

educational kiosk, and a boat docking facility with 9 boat slips on two floating concrete docks. The boat basin has limited space and is shallow. It is designed for boats under 30 feet in length. Access to the public use facilities is via boat, or walking a quarter mile of concrete nature trail and boardwalk connected to Ocean Blvd. (A1A). There is no vehicle parking available at this natural area. The anticipated completion of this project is scheduled for sometime this fall. For more information about the Ocean Ridge Natural Area project, contact the Environmental Enhancement and Restoration Division at 561-233-2400.

*By Harvey Rudolph*



Top left: Ocean Ridge Natural Area boardwalk, mangrove tree crab, common snook  
Bottom right: osprey, red mangrove, raccoon tracks



## ARTIST OF THE SCRUB

### Department Volunteer Creates Sculptures for Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area Entrance

Thanks to Department volunteer Chrisanthy Vargo, the Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area entrance, leased and maintained by the Town of Hypoluxo, is home to bronze sculptures of a Florida scrub-jay, giant airplant, common gray fox, and gopher tortoise. Chrisanthy has been a site steward for the Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area, owned and maintained by the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management, for more than three years. When she isn't sculpting clay, she is removing trash and invasive exotic plants from the scrub. Chrisanthy took some time off from her busy schedule (she also teaches art at Calusa Elementary) to answer a few questions about her artwork:

#### Why did you choose to sculpt a gopher tortoise, scrub-jay, gray fox, and airplant?

Mayor Ken Schultz of the Town of Hypoluxo wanted to commission an artist to create sculptures of animals that live in the scrub. He wanted the sculptures mounted on posts so the artwork complimented the observation towers and the Barefoot Mailman sculpture located on the Town of Hypoluxo property. I was thrilled to be offered the job and knew that I wanted to do a scrub-jay. The fox, airplant, and tortoise finished the composition.

#### How do you create your bronze sculptures?

I used photos and observations of live animals at the natural area to create drawings of the sculptures. After the drawings were approved by the Town of Hypoluxo, I made armatures of wood scraps, wire and newspaper to support the clay models. The clay models were then taken to Robert St. Croix sculpture studio to have silicone rubber molds made of them. Wax models were then made from those rubber molds. I detailed the wax models and then they went back to St. Croix's studio for the casting. The casting process is quite detailed. First the models were sprued (wax rods added to the outside of the models to make a path for the metal to travel to the main piece and to let air out of the mold as the metal is poured in) and then covered with plaster. Then the wax was melted and molten bronze poured into the hollow plaster mold. Once the mold cooled, it was cracked off with a hammer. The sprues were ground off, along with any other imperfections. Lastly, patinas were applied to add color to the sculptures.



#### How much time did it take you to create the sculptures and how heavy are they?

It took a little over a year, from drawings to installation, to complete all four bronze sculptures. The scrub-jay is the lightest, at roughly 10 pounds. The gray fox and airplant each weigh around 75 pounds. The gopher tortoise is the heaviest at roughly 100 pounds. All the sculptures are anchored to either wooden posts or concrete to keep them in place.

Chrisanthy plans to continue creating art inspired by nature. She is currently working on a lotus jar and a red-eared slider turtle jar that were commissioned earlier this year. For more information on Chrisanthy and her artwork, visit her website at [www.chrisanthy.com](http://www.chrisanthy.com)



## Upcoming Meetings

- AREEC - November 9
- CLASC - Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4
- NAMAC - Oct. 20, Nov. 17, Dec. 15
- PBCRRT - Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12
- SLWIAC - November 9

For times and locations, please call 561-233-2400. Dates and times are subject to change.

- AREEC - Artificial Reef and Estuarine Enhancement Committee
- CLASC - Conservation Land Acquisition Selection Committee
- NAMAC - Natural Areas Management Advisory Committee
- PBCRRT - Palm Beach County Reef Research Team
- SLWIAC - South Lake Worth Inlet Advisory Committee

## Do You Know About the Peanut Island Tour?

Kathy Vaughn loves to talk to people about "her" island. Whether it's a brief overview of the creation of the levee surrounding the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) dredged material management pit or identifying the marinelife found in the lagoon, Kathy helps Peanut Island visitors appreciate the ingenuity of man's construction feats and the beauty of nature. Before a tour, each group receives a presentation on Peanut Island and the history of the habitat restoration project. Then the group follows Kathy on a walking tour around the island and up to the FIND levee area. Groups from Leadership Palm Beach County, Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, and Pine Jog Environmental Education Center have already toured the island. For more information about a Peanut Island tour, contact Kathy at 561-358-5666.



Kathy leads her group to the top of the FIND levee

# SAVING NATURE

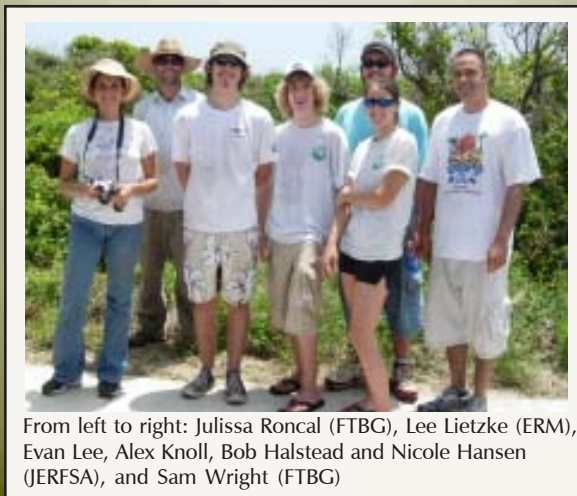
## Endangered Plant Gets a Helping Hand

In November 2005, Jupiter Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy (JERFSA) faculty approached the Department about working with endangered beach jacquemontia (*Jacquemontia reclinata*) as a potential class project. Beach jacquemontia is a member of the morning glory family. It is found in small, widely separated populations in Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties where habitat loss and modification place this species at a high risk of extinction. In 1993 it was listed as endangered by the federal government. Habitat conservation, management and reintroduction efforts are needed to ensure the survival of this species which currently has a population of less than 700 in the wild.

JERFSA students Nicole Hansen, Bob Halstead, Evan Pettis, Alex Knoll and Nick Morvillo agreed to help manage the beach jacquemontia population at Carlin Park in Jupiter. They received assistance from biologists at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) who were monitoring the Carlin Park population. The beach jacquemontia is a small, low-growing vine that can survive the tough conditions found at the beach. But it can't survive being shaded out by more aggressive plants. Approximately once a week, the students inspect the beach jacquemontia and remove adjacent invasive plant material to insure that the plants receive adequate sunlight.

On June 15, 2006, FTBG researchers and Department staff evaluated several locations for an outplanting of beach jacquemontia grown from seeds and cuttings collected from Carlin and Loggerhead Parks. They determined that the coastal portion of the Juno Dunes Natural Area was a good recipient site. JERFSA students assisted with the planting and measured and recorded location information for 32 seedlings. The plants receive supplemental watering once a week if it does not rain. The students have logged over 130 hours on this project so far. FTBG and Department staff will continue to monitor the status of the plants in the outplanting project.

*By Ginny Powell and Melissa Tolbert*



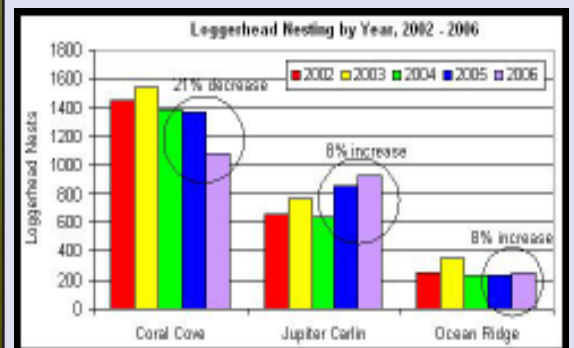
From left to right: Julissa Roncal (FTBG), Lee Lietzke (ERM), Evan Lee, Alex Knoll, Bob Halstead and Nicole Hansen (JERFSA), and Sam Wright (FTBG)

## Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nesting Results for 2006 May Be Lower than Normal

The 2006 sea turtle nesting season is coming to a close. Though actual totals were not available by the print date of this newsletter, sea turtle monitoring personnel throughout Palm Beach County have estimated that loggerhead nesting may be down as much as 30% from the 2005 season. The 2005 season was the second lowest loggerhead sea turtle nesting season on record. However, two of the three beaches monitored by the Department have recorded above average loggerhead totals. Jupiter's Carlin Park area recorded the highest loggerhead nesting numbers since the beach was renourished in the winter of 2001/2002, a 27% increase over the previous five year average. Also, Ocean Ridge recorded an 8% increase over the 2005 loggerhead totals, an impressive increase considering the beach was renourished recently which often causes loggerhead nesting to drop by up to 50%. Unfortunately, Coral Cove Park recorded the lowest number of loggerhead nests since detailed monitoring began in 1996, a 25% decrease from the five year average.

Sea turtle nesting totals can fluctuate greatly between years, especially when beach conditions have been altered, as in the wake of three major tropical systems during 2004 and 2005. Based on estimates from sea turtle monitoring programs throughout Palm Beach County, it is likely the 2006 season will have lower than average loggerhead nesting totals. Until the countywide nesting totals are finalized in early December, it is too soon to make any meaningful conclusions from this apparent reduction in loggerhead sea turtle nests along Palm Beach County's beaches.

*By Carly De Maye*





## FLAME OF LIFE

### Prescribed Fire at Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area Creates Healthy Habitat

A prescribed burn, totaling 105 acres, was conducted at the Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area on July 27, 2006. Several organizations participated in the burn, including Palm Beach Fire-Rescue, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, Florida Division of Forestry, and Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management. In addition to this burn, prescribed burns have already been conducted at the Hungryland Slough Natural Area. Natural Areas scheduled to have units burned later this year include Sweetbay, Loxahatchee River, and Yamato Scrub.

Plants, animals, and people benefit from prescribed burning. This land management tool returns nutrients to the soil for new plant growth. It encourages seed germination in fire-adapted species and removes invasive plants. Prescribed burning improves wildlife habitat. Sun-loving plants colonize the areas opened by fire, providing a wider variety of food sources for wildlife. Prescribed burning also reduces hazardous fuel loads (dead plants and thick underbrush) which lowers the risk of potentially large and uncontrollable wildfires that may threaten residential areas.

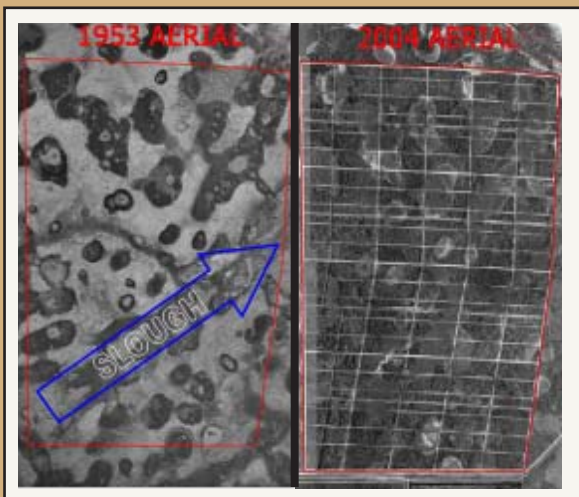
*By Kraig Krum*



## MAKING WETLANDS WETTER

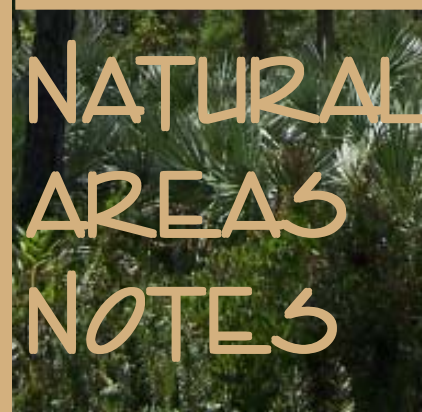
### Restoring the Hungryland Slough Unit 11 Mitigation Area

The Unit 11 Regional Offsite Mitigation Area is a 1,770 acre area that was previously subdivided into 1-acre parcels in the 1970s. Dirt roads and canals were installed at that time in preparation for residential development. The homes were never built due to the high cost of providing adequate drainage, and permitting and environmental constraints. Palm Beach County began acquiring the lots within Unit 11 in 1996 to preserve the wetland habitat. The acquisition was completed in June 2006.



Wetland restoration has been ongoing at the site since early 2004. The goal of the project is to remove dirt roads from wetlands and backfill canals in an effort to restore historic water levels and flows in the wetlands and slough. Over 10 miles of dirt roads and 6 miles of canals and ditches have been removed to date. The earth moving phase of restoration is expected to be completed next year. After that, follow-up monitoring of native plant recruitment, and control of non-native invasive plants will be performed as necessary to complete this important restoration project.

*By Steve Pisano*



# HELPING NATURE RECOVER

## Restoration Project Underway at Pine Glades Natural Area

Department staff initiated a large restoration project this spring at Pine Glades Natural Area. Pine Glades is one of the largest natural areas at almost 6,500 acres. It is located south of Indiantown Road between the Beeline Highway and Jupiter Farms. The restoration project is located in the south-eastern portion of the site near Jupiter Farms. The first stage of the project dealt with the removal of 135 acres of invasive exotic melaleuca trees. Due to the extended dry season this year, 100 acres of melaleuca were cleared mechanically. Once the trees were cleared, they were ground up into mulch and removed from the site by large tractor trailers. An additional 140 acres of melaleuca, which was growing in scattered clumps among native vegetation, was treated chemically. Department staff expect to complete the exotic removal phase next spring when water levels are low. Additional improvements are planned that will restore the hydrology to historic water levels. This restoration project will allow more use of the natural area by native plants and animals.

By Kraig Krum

### Impacts of Invasive Plants

- ◆ Compete with native plants for nutrients, water, and space
- ◆ Reduces biodiversity
- ◆ Pose severe economic threat to local economy
- ◆ Adversely affect endangered plants, animals, and ecosystems



# THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM

## Can You Spot the Differences Between the Native and Exotic Firebush?

One day you decide to add more native plants to your landscape. You trot down to your local nursery and decide on the well-known, do-no-wrong, firebush plant (*Hamelia patens*). The firebush is a large shrub or small tree with striking red flowers that bloom year-round and is one of the best hummingbird and butterfly plant species. This plant can be found throughout Central and Southern Florida, the Caribbean, and Mexico. It makes an excellent landscape plant as its high drought tolerance makes for easy care and maintenance. While at the nursery, you notice that they are selling a "compact" cultivar of the firebush called 'compacta' or 'dwarf', which you decide to purchase. Little did you know it, but most likely you purchased a non-native firebush.

During the past decade, a non-native firebush has become a favorite of gardeners and the landscape and nursery industry. Initially known as African firebush, it became popular due to its initial compact size. It was discovered that this firebush is actually from Central and South America (it was brought to Africa, hence the misnomer). The scientific name for this plant is *Hamelia patens* var. *glabra*. In addition, this cultivar is not really compact or dwarf, just slow growing. The problem lies in the fact that this plant is often being passed on as the Florida native firebush. The native firebush is now more difficult to find and is usually found only at smaller native-only nurseries. In addition, the non-native firebush is now spreading on its own and may pose a hybridization risk with the native plant. To make matters more confusing, a very small handful of native plant nurseries are selling their own version of the 'compacta' firebush that is the Florida native. These nurseries basically have collected cuttings or seeds from native firebushes that display a more compact form.

So, what can you do to make sure that you purchase the correct firebush? You need to learn how to tell them apart. Luckily, that is easy to do. There are two ways to differentiate the native from the non-native firebush. The first and easiest way is to look at the flowers. The native firebush has red flowers that sometimes have a yellow tint on the tips. The non-native firebush generally has a more yellowish flower. Another method is to look at the leaf. The native firebush has small white hairs completely covering the underside of the leaves, while the non-native is relatively hairless. These two identifiers should help you discern between the two firebushes.

By Matthew King



Native Firebush

Non-native Firebush



1

2

3

4

## VOLUNTEERS PROTECTING PALM BEACH COUNTY'S GOOD NATURE

### MFUGE LENDS A HAND TO HELP NATURE

A group of twenty-one high school and college students from the southeastern United States spent four days in July working with Department staff on habitat restoration projects from Jupiter to Boynton Beach. These hard-working volunteers produced amazing results: they cut 1,000 feet of hiking trail, planted 2,400 red mangrove seedlings, planted 1,000 saw palmetto seedlings, and removed 1,200 pounds of trash.

### PONDHAWK GETS A GOOD CLEANING

The 79-acre Pondhawk Natural Area, located in Boca Raton, needed a good cleaning. A small, but dedicated, volunteer crew removed 560 pounds of trash from the natural area's perimeter with Yamato Road and Spanish River Boulevard. Some of the more unusual debris removed from the site included a sofa seat cushion, a large street sign, and a tire.

### A WETLAND MAKEOVER AT YAMATO SCRUB

A new wetland was created in the north section of the 217-acre Yamato Scrub Natural Area, located in Boca Raton, during the first half of this year. Native grasses were beginning to grow along the shoreline, however, it was decided that Mother Nature could use a helping hand. Volunteers, including employees from LexisNexis, planted 2,000 *Spartina* grass seedlings along the muddy wetland edges. When the grass matures, it will provide habitat for ducks, wading birds, and other native wildlife.

### SUMMER CAMPS CLEAN UP JUNO DUNES

Okeeheelee Nature Center Summer Nature Camps volunteered their time to remove balsampear and trash from the 578-acre natural area located in Juno Beach. One visit the kids got drenched, the other visit the kids were roasted by the sun. Through it all they removed 75 pounds of trash and invasive plants from the natural area.

By Ann Mathews



5



6



7



8

1. MFUGE volunteers pose for a picture before clearing a trail at Prosperity Oaks Natural Area. 2. Volunteers show off some of the 440 pounds of trash they removed from Seacrest Scrub Natural Area. 3. Volunteers get a little dirty planting 3,000 red mangrove seedlings at Ocean Ridge Natural Area. 4. An MFUGE volunteer holds up a very worn pot found at Limestone Creek Natural Area. 5. Okeeheelee Summer Nature Camp volunteers pick up trash along U.S. Highway 1 at Juno Dunes Natural Area. 6. Castorbean plants were just some of the invasive plants removed by volunteers at Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area. 7. *Spartina* grass gets planted at Yamato Scrub Natural Area. 8. Maidencane grass gets planted at Yamato Scrub Natural Area.

## Staff Donates Cell Phones

Department staff recently contributed 25 used cell phones to the Secure the Call Foundation, a non-profit coalition of Police Departments, Sheriff's Offices, Battered Women's Shelters, Neighborhood Watch Groups, and Senior Citizen Centers. This coalition takes used cell phones and converts them into 911 emergency-only phones. The phones are inspected, cleaned, recharged, and reprogrammed. The phones are then distributed to those with an immediate need for 911 access.

It's estimated that in the United States there are over 45 million old cell phones sitting in drawers and closets. These old cell phones can help tens of thousands of people feel safe and secure by converting them into 911 emergency-only cell phones. Any phone that can be turned on can be used to call 911. Secure the Call needs your old phones to make this program a success. For more information, go to the Secure the Call website at [www.donatemycellphone.org](http://www.donatemycellphone.org).

## BE A WATER WATCHER

Palm Beach County is home to water bodies of all shapes and sizes - canals, lakes, rivers, and the ocean. These areas are home to hundreds of plants and animals and provide outstanding recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. These delicate systems need to be preserved and protected.

To report suspicious non-stormwater discharges to any drainage system, contact the Water Resources Protection Program at 561-233-2400.



Limestone Creek Natural Area

## *Environmental Times*

Volume 11 Issue 3

Published quarterly by the Palm Beach County  
Department of Environmental Resources Management  
2300 N. Jog Road - Fourth Floor  
West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743  
561-233-2400  
[www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/erm](http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/erm)

Richard E. Walesky.....Department Director  
Rob Robbins.....Deputy Director  
Ann Mathews.....Editor/Graphics/Layout



### Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

Tony Masilotti.....Chairman  
Addie L. Greene.....Vice Chairperson  
Karen T. Marcus  
Jeff Koons  
Warren H. Newell  
Mary McCarty  
Burt Aaronson

Robert Weisman.....County Administrator  
Verdenia Baker.....Deputy County Administrator

## *Environmental Times*



Board of County Commissioners  
Department of Environmental  
Resources Management  
2300 N. Jog Road - Fourth Floor  
West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743



Printed on paper containing 30% post-consumer recycled fiber