

October 2008

THE FLORIDA WILDLIFER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE MIAMI AND BEYOND

By Jay Exum

Greetings,

As we finally approach the actual date of the National The Wildlife Society (TWS) Conference in Miami, I want to encourage you all to sustain the energy and focus you've had over the past two years for one more month. Steve Rockwood and Carrie Sekerak have done a fantastic job of organizing, energizing, cajoling, and pleading with the rest of us to fulfill our commitments and focus on the planning of this conference for at least three years. I know that the culmination will result in a fantastic conference, memorable field trips, and good times in Miami. Just the planning of the conference itself has resulted in some pretty memorable moments in Miami already. Most of us have made various commitments for the conference, so I want to encourage you to arrive early and enjoy the conference, but most of all, please make sure that you exceed the high expectations that TWS National staff has for this conference. Steve and Carrie have kept us on track so far; now let's actually perform at the conference next month.

After the conference, we'll go back to Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society (FLTWS) business. We have begun to plan for our conventional spring meeting to be held in early 2009 and will re-establish our desire to be a great conduit for FLTWS members. We hope to have a 'Wildlife 2060' theme (more on page 4) at the Spring Conference, and we will seek ways for the Chapter to get involved with this Florida initiative. With the economic crisis, the war on two fronts, and the presidential election, conservation issues have all been put on the back burner, and we've got a challenge to re-emphasize conservation and management of wildlife habitat as a priority for the state to 2009. We have a great new website, we have a motivated Board, we will have an extraordinary number of people energized by the national conference, and we should hit the ground running in the spring of 2009. I look forward to what we can accomplish.



Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society President

Jay H. Exum, Ph.D.

Jay H. Exum, Ph.D.
FLTWS President



STUDENT CHAPTER REPORT

Highlights From the University of Florida Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Submitted by Ashley Williams

The student chapter is in full swing and has a lot of events going on this semester! We recently participated in a road clean-up of our adopted road, collecting 12 bags of roadside litter. We also recently won first place at a charity bull-riding competition for cancer research. We camped at the Caravelle Ranch Wildlife Management Area bunkhouse for a weekend of learning, fishing, birding, herping, canoeing, and socializing. In addition, several professionals participated that weekend to teach us different wildlife skills such as trapping, vehicle use, rocket netting, hunting and tree stands, and more. Our new education coordinator is setting up an environmental education outreach program at one of the local schools. Several club members will be receiving certification in teaching Project Wild curriculum next month and helping out at the school. We hope to expand this outreach program in the near future to include other local schools. Several students have signed up to volunteer at local hunter check stations to help out and gain some experience at the refuge. Other than that, plans are underway for the National Conference in Miami and we currently have 20 students registered to attend. We are looking forward to the rest of the semester!

Many members of the University of Florida Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society participate in research or volunteer projects, internships, and summer nonprofit work. These opportunities provide wildlifers with practical knowledge and experience that will help them get into Graduate school or land a job after graduation. To the right and below are a few pictures of a recent conclave where members competed and tested their overall wildlifer skills and abilities.

For more student chapter information,
please visit our website
<http://grove.ufl.edu/~twc>



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FLORIDA CHAPTER



Check Out Our New Website

Submitted by Arnold Brunell

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society (FLTWS) website has a new look, and we think you'll be impressed. The address remains the same, so click on your FLTWS "Favorites" button or type in www.fltws.org. The new design and structure went live recently and is the result of a group tasked to improve our website's look and functionality. The group was formed at the Spring Meeting as one of several focus sessions to address FLTWS priority issues. Patrick Delaney took the lead in the endeavor and was assisted by the efforts of Blair Hayman, Stefanie Nagid, Rainer Shaw, Larame Ferry, Dale Gawlik, Maria Zondervan, Steve Rockwood, Steve Stiegler, and Arnold Brunell. Key to the development of the new website was to find a vendor that provided the skills and artistic talent that were desired for a reasonable price. After reviewing the services, products, and costs of several potential vendors, the committee unanimously decided on "Bring the Bling" (<http://www.bringthebling.com/index.php>). The company provided design concepts and ideas that were reviewed and refined by the committee members. FLTWS will continue to manage the site but will have the resources of the design company when needed. As you browse through the website, take note of and enjoy the pictures that are used – many are provided by FLTWS members. In fact, if you submit pictures that are appropriate for the website, you might see them pop up on the screen! Remember, this is your organization and your website. Be proud of these achievements that you make possible and enjoy them!



FLORIDA NEWS

Wildlife 2060:

What's at stake for Florida?

(Get the report here.)



Florida's natural lands and waters are at the core of our state's prosperity, bringing billions of dollars in economic benefits to our state every year. Our forests, rivers and creeks, and coastal waters are invaluable to fish and wildlife and to our own quality of life.

But recent predictions indicate that our state's human population may double to 36 million in the next 50 years. If that happens, as a [study](#) published by [1000 Friends of Florida](#) suggests, about seven million acres of land could be converted from rural and natural to urban uses ([see maps](#)). If we develop as we have in the past, roads, shopping malls, and subdivisions will replace the rich diversity our landscape currently offers. Development also will impact our coastal waters and coral reefs.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has prepared this [report](#) to help you understand the changes that may occur in Florida's fish and wildlife and in our own lifestyles if the state's population doubles.

In the years to come, leaving the work of conservation and management to just a few won't be enough. We will need fresh, effective strategies, including smart growth initiatives and green infrastructure planning, to direct and shape the growth that is coming our way. By encouraging development that is economically sound, environmentally sensitive, and community-friendly, instead of allowing haphazard sprawl, we can keep the Florida we love.

Within the report pages, you will see predictions of what might come to pass and read stories about just a few of the many Floridians, both in the private sector and working for government, who have dedicated themselves to conserving our fish and wildlife resources.

What does the future hold for Florida's fish and wildlife? That's up to all of us.



Operation Oak 2008-2009

National Wild Turkey Federation's Regional Program

Submitted by Brian Zielinski

The National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Operation Oak program is dedicated to restoring and creating oak habitat throughout the southeast. Last year alone, this program provided over 10,000 oak trees for planting on private lands throughout Florida. The NWTF has once again shown its commitment to this program in Florida and will have 15,000 trees available to private landowners including white oak, live oak, swamp chestnut



oak, cherry bark oak, and persimmon. All trees will be shipped to pre-determined, centralized locations within the panhandle and peninsular Florida for pick up in February 2008. A minimum request of 100 trees will be required, in addition to membership to the NWTF. The NWTF will send a letter to all interested landowners with an application form attached and completed applications must be received no later than December 15, 2008 to be considered for the program. If you are interested in participating in this program for 2008-09, please contact Brian M. Zielinski, NWTF Regional Biologist, via phone at 386-804-6691 or email bzielinski@nwtf.org in order to be placed on the mailing list. Thank You!



CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

INDIGO NEWS

By Kevin Enge with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

During the last year, a lot has happened involving research and conservation of the eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*). A State Wildlife Grant-funded study by Dr. Kenneth Krysko and Dr. Daniel Smith on the genetics (mtDNA) of indigos found the presence of both Atlantic Coast and Gulf Coast clades. Snakes from southeastern Georgia and eastern peninsular Florida as far south as Osceola County differ from those in the rest of Florida (Alachua County has both clades). Samples are lacking from the Atlantic Coast Ridge in southeastern Florida, so it is unclear how far south the Atlantic Coast clade extends. Anyone who finds a shed indigo skin from this area, please contact Dr. Krysko (kenneyk@flmnh.ufl.edu).



Eastern indigo snake; photo from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Florida Field Office

Project Orianne, an indigo snake conservation initiative funded by Dr. Tom Kaplan, will be a major force in indigo conservation and research in the future. Dr. Kaplan has funded numerous conservation and research efforts on big cats around the world through Project Panthera, and he sponsored two indigo conservation summits in the past year that were attended by invited biologists from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens. Project Orianne currently has four staff members and recently advertised for a land manager position. Project Orianne consists of a lands initiative, a restoration/land management program, a captive breeding/reintroduction program, an inventory/monitoring program, and a research program. It recently purchased 900 acres of indigo property in Georgia where a captive breeding facility will be built. Because of Florida's high land prices and successful conservation land acquisition programs, much of the emphasis in Florida will be on helping agencies manage or restore existing lands through funding or education and on developing survey and monitoring programs and research projects. In June, Project Orianne staff visited potential indigo snake reintroduction sites in the Panhandle, but future reintroductions are contingent upon the addition of relocated gopher tortoises to these large tracts of land. An inadequate number of tortoise burrows for winter refugia is thought to be a major reason for the decline of indigo snake populations in the relatively undeveloped Panhandle. This winter a specially trained, indigo-sniffing dog will be used to test the effectiveness of this survey technique. Field trials will be run, and if successful, additional dogs will be trained for future survey and monitoring efforts.

Using GIS, Mark Endries with FWC has developed a map of potential indigo habitat in Florida that factors in habitats, soils, and unfragmented patch size. To test the utility of this map and to document the current distribution of the indigo snake in Florida, Kevin Enge with FWC obtained indigo snake records from various databases and solicited sightings from hundreds of biologists and snake enthusiasts. The emphasis was on obtaining sightings from conservation lands, but records from private lands were included. If anyone has indigo sightings to share, please contact him at Kevin.Eng@MyFWC.com. Preliminary results indicate that 42% of Florida's land area is potential indigo habitat, and 41% of the habitat occurs on conservation lands. Sixty-nine conservation lands contain >10,000 acres of potential habitat, which has been proposed as the acreage necessary to support viable populations in the long term. Since 2000, indigos have been sighted on ca. 100 conservation lands in Florida, but there is only one credible sighting since 1999 from the entire Panhandle and no sightings since 1998 from the Keys.

Concerns about the plight of indigo snakes inhabiting sites scheduled for flooding as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) have led to meetings of the agencies involved to discuss information needs and possible research projects and conservation strategies. Some of these indigo-inhabited CERP sites are >10,000 acres in size and will likely impact large numbers of indigos. Discussions are still in the preliminary stages, and no course of action has been decided upon yet.

For more information on indigo snakes, there is a 2007 report on the status of the species in the Florida Panhandle and adjacent areas of Georgia and Alabama (<http://www.lakejacksonturtles.org/aresco/IndigoSnakeProjectReport.pdf>). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published their five-year status review in 2008 and concluded that the indigo snake still warrants listing as a threatened species (http://ecos.fws.gov/docs/five_year_review/doc1910.pdf).

If you have further questions, contact Kevin Enge at Kevin.Eng@MyFWC.com.



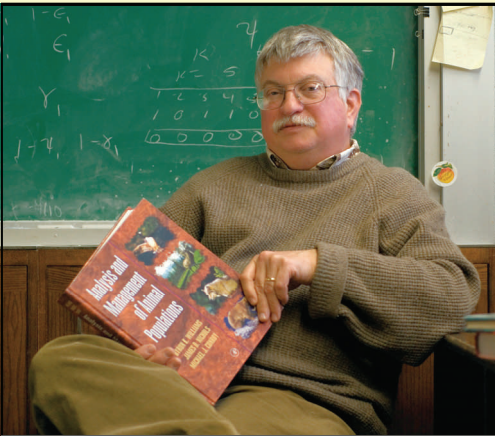
FLORIDA CHAPTER *Spotlights*

Dr. Wiley M. Kitchens was granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior (DOI) in recognition of his outstanding scientific and technical contributions to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in wetlands ecosystem ecology and management.

Dr. Kitchens' ecology research has improved our understanding and management of significant elements of the Nation's wetland resources. His research career has been focused on resolving complex issues involving the impact of water management on fish and wildlife resources in large, generally degraded wetland landscapes. His works are models of multidisciplinary approaches to wetland system management, examining the complex interactions of biological species, habitats, hydrology, and geomorphology. Because of Dr. Kitchens' efforts to elucidate the ecological structure and function of tidal wetlands of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, a navigational feature impacting the salinity regime of the estuary for 20 years was de-authorized, restoring vitality to the largest remaining track of tidal fresh marsh along the East Coast. This was the first completed and active Army Corps of Engineers project ever de-authorized as a result of documented negative environmental impacts. Because of his multidisciplinary background and wetland expertise, Dr. Kitchens was detailed to the Federal Taskforce planning the Restoration of the South Florida Ecosystem Initiative. In this role, he provided critical scientific leadership and seminal authorship of key documents that set the framework for the Everglades Restoration. Additionally, he began examining the consequences of hydrologic regimes and wetland habitat fragmentation on the degradation of wetland systems of importance to the endangered Florida snail kite, a topic on which he is frequently consulted by state and federal management agencies. The results of his study frame the issues and options for sustaining viable populations of snail kites in Florida, providing critical information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Multispecies Recovery Plan and elevating the kite to the status of a system-wide performance measure of the success of the Everglades Restoration. Dr. Kitchens' work on Everglades and other wetland systems in Florida laid much of the foundation for the multi-agency Greater Everglades Ecological Restoration Project and the USFWS Multispecies Recovery Plan for the South Florida Ecosystem. As an authority on wetland systems, he has also provided briefings to the National Academy of Science to assist with their assessment of the efficacy of the Everglades Restoration Plan and progress. For his outstanding contributions to the USGS, Dr. Wiley M. Kitchens is granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior.



Dr. Wiley Kitchens



Dr. Michael Conroy

Dr. Michael Conroy was granted the Meritorious Service Award of the DOI in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the theory, development, and application of structured decision making and adaptive management to DOI lands and resources.

Dr. Conroy has been a pioneer in developing quantitative methods for estimating parameters and modeling wildlife populations and communicating these to various constituencies. His most notable contributions have been to new theory and methods for the measurement and incorporation of learning in the context of structured decision making and analysis. His leadership and work in structured decision theory and adaptive management practices helped to form the basis for DOI's newly endorsed, adaptive resource management initiative. While in the USGS, Dr. Conroy has become an advocate of the structured decision approach to addressing management needs, and has by example, laid the groundwork for the application of these new approaches to wildlife management. Importantly, his work established the adaptive framework for the USFWS's and Canadian Wildlife Service's international harvest strategy for American black ducks. As a practitioner, he has transformed abstract theory into applied reality, leading the way for broader appreciation and use of learning in the context of structured decision making within DOI.

For example, his adaptive survey methodology work is now becoming core to the USFWS structured approach to decisions on population viability analyses for endangered Alabama beach mice, adaptive survey design and protocols for ivory-billed woodpeckers, and forest bird assessment and management. His predictive modeling of wading birds is being used in Everglades restoration efforts. The National Wildlife Refuge system is using his methods in planning for restoration and management of old growth forests in the Southeast. Dr. Conroy also is recognized internationally for his work on structured decisions and is sought as a consultant/researcher on its application to international conservation issues including the control of exotic vertebrate species (Spain) and the impacts of fisheries bycatch on endangered New Zealand dolphins. Because of his work, the interactive relationship of research and management are being reframed into a continuum in which research and management are linked in a structured, learn through management approach. For his outstanding contributions to the development, acceptance, and application of structured decision processes to natural resource management, Dr. Michael Conroy is granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Think Locally, Act Neighborly: Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas in Florida

Submitted by Erin P. Myers, USDA-NRCS

Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) are derived from the same concept as Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs), which are common in the Western U.S. These partnerships are developed to unite federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, private landowners, and various interested groups under the common goal of managing invasive plants in a defined area. As many of us already know, invasive species know no boundaries, and as such, we must learn to work “across the fence” on both private and public lands to control these plants and animals.



Dioscorea bulbifera L. - air potato
R.A. Howard @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

How can CISMAs help? They address concerns including prevention, education/awareness, early detection and rapid response to new threats or locations. They help with monitoring of existing invasive species, development of integrated pest management plans, and determining success of management.

How can CISMAs improve our current management? They allow us to expand our efforts across the landscape, rather than just to political or property boundaries. By combining knowledge and experience, we are able to develop, adopt, and utilize Best Management Practices which allow us to reduce risks and improve the results of control efforts. Also, by improving information sharing and communications, we combine our resources with a broader focus area to provide a more effective early detection and rapid response network.

What are the benefits? We are united by a common mission and vision, increase visibility of the problem, and consequently build community awareness. Use the partnership (public and private partners) to secure, share, and coordinate funding, thereby reducing individual costs in a time when resources are limited.

What is in a name? Landowners in the western states organized into CWMA's when they realized they needed a new approach to combat invasive plant problems. It has proven to be a successful program, where some Cooperative Weed Management Areas have existed in the western U.S. for many years. Due to the longevity of this concept, some funding is tied directly to the CWMA approach (i.e., Public Law 108-412, some current grants such as the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative), and the governmental and foundation based funding entities are accustomed to seeing “CWMA” in proposals, particularly National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Pulling Together Initiative grants, and associate that name with successful programs.

However, as the concept has expanded to the east and the southeast, new names have arisen on well established and well-known partnerships including New York's Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) and Florida's Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ECISMA), which includes management plans for both invasive plants and animals. Others include Marion County's Invasive Species Management Council, the Alachua County Cogongrass Initiative, and the Florida Keys Invasive Exotic Task Force.

How to get started? **First, use the five basic characteristics:** 1) Defined geographic area, 2) Involvement or representation of the majority of landowners and natural resource managers in the defined area, 3) Steering committee, 4) Commitment to cooperation, 5) Comprehensive plan that addresses the management or prevention of one or more noxious weeds or invasive plants.

(Continued on following page)

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

NEWS

The Wildlife Society Now Accepting Applications for Government Affairs Program Interns

The Wildlife Society (TWS) has an opening for two Wildlife Policy Interns with an interest in wildlife resources and policy issues. This **6-month** internship runs every year from January-June or July-December at TWS Headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland. TWS is currently accepting applications for an internship from January to June 2009.

DUTIES: The Wildlife Policy Interns will research conservation issues, prepare background information for use in testimony or comments, assist with developing content for Society publications, and attend legislative hearings. Interns will also assist in the routine activities of TWS with specific duties tailored according to the interests of the individual intern.

POSITION: This internship is a full time, six month, paid position, carrying a stipend of \$1,800 per month. Interns are responsible for their own housing and insurance.

QUALIFICATIONS: Applicants should provide evidence of their ability to conduct research and carry out projects independently, must have excellent writing skills, and should have a track record of work displaying initiative, maturity, and responsibility. Knowledge of how the federal government functions is helpful but not essential. Although student status is not required, applicants *with academic training in wildlife biology/management or another natural resource field are preferred.*

COLLEGE CREDIT: The Wildlife Society will cooperate with universities/colleges that offer credit for intern programs; however, students must make all arrangements for receiving academic credit.

TO APPLY: Please send a cover letter, a one-page resume, contact information for three references, a college transcript (unofficial or official), two writing samples (one general and one technical), and your dates of availability. Finalists will be interviewed in person or by telephone. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until all available positions are filled.

Please send completed applications to (email preferred):

Laura Bies, Associate Director of Government Affairs. E-mail is laura@wildlife.org

The Wildlife Society

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Consider a Donation to the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Submitted by Arnold Brunell

It's the time of the year that many of us are looking to make donations to our favorite charitable organizations. Each year, the state conducts a "Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign" (FSECC) that allows state employees to easily donate money through pre-tax payroll deductions as well as other avenues. With payroll deduction, state employees select from a list of approved organizations and can specify how much and how often (biweekly, monthly, etc.) they wish to donate. Thanks to the efforts of Brian Scheick, Steve Stiegler, Steve Rockwood, Maria Zondervan, and Larry Perrin, the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society (FLTWS) has been added to the list of organizations from which to choose. So when browsing through the myriad of worthy charities listed in the FSECC booklet, please consider a donation to FLTWS. The identification code used in the booklets is different for different regional booklets, but the title will be "Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society (FLTWS)."

For those who are not state employees and would like to donate to FLTWS, please contact Maria Zondervan (Treasurer) by phone at (407) 659-4872 or e-mail mzondervan@sjrwmd.com. FLTWS is a 501(C) (3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible. Your financial support will be used to build the Chapter's endowment fund, foster professional development through conferences and meetings, and further the wildlife and natural resources conservation efforts of our Chapter.



MEETINGS AND EVENTS OF INTEREST

2008 Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society

November 8-12, 2008 in Miami, Florida

<http://joomla.wildlife.org/?CFID=13198560&CFTOKEN=17827620>

Public Land Acquisition and Management Partnership Conference 2008

December 3-5, 2008 in Jacksonville, Florida

<http://www.ces.fau.edu/plam2008/>

Using Science for Decision Making in Dynamic Systems

December 8-11, 2008 in Naples, Florida

<http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ACES/>

Managing for Diversity Across Florida's Unique Landscapes

December 9-11, 2008 in Kissimmee, Florida

<http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/>

24th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference

January 8-11, 2009 in Miami, Florida

www.evergladescoalition.org

24th Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference

January 11-15, 2009 in Tallahassee, Florida

<http://www.talltimbers.org/FEconference/index.html>



Presidential candidates U.S. Senator Barack Obama (left) and Senator John McCain (right).

Science and the Presidential Candidates

The Republican and Democratic presidential candidates answered 14 science-based questions posed by a new organization trying to raise the profile of science in the upcoming election. For a summary of their replies, see the [ENS story](#). For the complete answers, see [ScienceDebate2008](#).

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An organization of wildlife profes-
sionals and others interested in
proper management of Florida's
natural resources.

Visit our website www.fltws.org to
become a member.

