

SCCF MEMBER UPDATE

Recap of Florida's 2017 Legislative Session

By Rae Ann Wessel and Holly Schwartz, Natural Resource Policy

Florida's 2017 legislative session adjourned on Monday, May 8, after a weekend extension. Thanks to all who engaged by making phone calls and sending emails. Your voice was heard and helped achieve some positive outcomes.

Everglades — EAA Reservoir, SB 10 **PASSED**

One of our top priorities this session was supporting Senate President Negrón's EAA Reservoir bill to accelerate planning and identify the land for a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee in the EAA. It passed and has been signed by the Governor! The biggest change reflects a compromise to gain House support. Instead of buying additional land for the reservoir, existing state-owned lands, currently leased to agriculture, will be used. The state-owned lands provide a smaller footprint but will provide a minimum storage capacity of 240,000 acre feet compared to the 360,000 acre feet originally identified. The bill included \$64 million in funding in addition to \$210 million from Legacy Florida. This is a significant advancement but will require our continued oversight and support to assure that the plan moves ahead and is implemented.

Florida Forever Funding — Land Acquisition Trust Fund **NOT FUNDED**

The legislature this year zeroed out funding for Florida Forever in a brazen political move to pander to agricultural interests. Two legislators who have announced their 2018 candidacy for state Agriculture Commissioner were instrumental in directing funds away from public project funding through Florida Forever and Florida Communities Trust to pay private agricultural interests for conservation easements. The allocation to conservation easements on private agricultural land increased to \$10 million, an increase from 3.5% to 40%. The funding also directs 30% of the land acquisition trust fund to agency staff salaries including DEP's I.T. staff! It is this continuing misappropriation of funding that has led to a pending lawsuit that was put on hold by the legislature until after the session.

Water Quality — Public Notification of Pollution, SB 1018 **PASSED**

A bill conceived after the Polk County Phosphate Mine sinkhole contaminated neighboring drinking water wells, this bill requires the polluter to report certain information to the State within 24 hours. A State Watch Office was also created within the Division of Emergency Management.

Energy Issues — Solar Implementation Bill, SB 90 **PASSED**

This bill implements the Solar Constitutional Amendment that voters passed in the 2016 August primary by 73%. Following considerable negotiation between the clean Senate version and the onerous House version of the bill, a compromise was passed that grants nonresidential property owners an 80% exemption from property tax assessments for renewable energy source devices, reducing the overall cost of solar systems.

Residential property owners retain a 100% property assessment tax exemption.

Fracking Ban, SB 442/HB 451 **DID NOT PASS**

Although the Fracking Ban bills had broad, bipartisan support, House Leadership blocked the ban with the requirement of a study to ward off potential lawsuits. Several studies have already been completed and the bill sponsors have indicated that this issue will be back next year.

Utility Investments in Gas Reserves, SB 1238/HB 1043 **DID NOT PASS**

This bill required FPL customers to pay the cost of exploration and unsustainable energy investments — such as fracking — in other states. Although supported in the Senate, House Speaker Corcoran did not agree that this was in the best interest of Floridians and refused to hear the bill in the House rendering it dead for this session.

See Legislature on Page 2

Legislature -- Continued from Page 1

Local Government Preemption, SB 1158/HB 17

DID NOT PASS

SB 1158 preempted local government regulation of commerce, trade and labor. The Florida League of Cities opposes legislation that eliminates municipal home rule powers as applied to businesses, professions and occupations, leaving local communities without effective means to address the health, safety, welfare and property rights concerns of their residents and businesses, in a manner best suited to their needs. We should expect some form of preemption bills to be filed in the future.

Sunshine Exemption, HB 843 **DID NOT PASS**

Collier County Freshman Representative Byron Donalds proposed this bill that would have allowed meetings between two members of certain boards or commissions to discuss public meeting issues without public notice or minutes of the meetings, which is not allowed under current sunshine rules. This bill failed to get the 2/3rds majority needed to pass. The failure of this bill serves and reflects the public interest in greater, not less, transparency in government deliberations and decision-making. We are disappointed that 3 of 4 Lee County Representatives voted in support of this bill. You can see the House votes at this link: <http://bit.ly/2qAAff>

Legislative Tracker

This year we debuted a new feature on our website to help you follow weekly committee hearings, votes, bill recaps and the status of bills SCCF was tracking. We now

Federal News — Nelson files bill to block expansion of offshore drilling

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson came to Fort Myers to meet with local elected officials and stakeholders to discuss a bill he and others have filed to block the administration from opening up any additional areas to offshore drilling until at least 2022.

For decades Senator Nelson has been an outspoken opponent of oil drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coasts off Florida. Due to his efforts there is currently a no-drilling zone that extends 125 miles off much of Florida's Gulf Coast and as far as 235 miles at some points to protect vital military training areas in the eastern Gulf until June 30, 2022.

Florida's unique environment, its multi-billion dollar tourism economy and national military training areas in the Gulf are key reasons why drilling should not be allowed.

The legislation heads to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for consideration.

know why this is not more easily available — it is a real challenge to keep updated *so we'd like to hear from you if it was helpful and worth the effort.*

Florida's 2018 Legislative Session will begin early next year, January 9, so committee hearings will begin in early fall. We hope you'll stay engaged and informed.

Did You Know? Legislative Terms and Acronyms: <https://www.flsenate.gov/reference/glossary>



Beer in the Bushes

April 15

Oyster Reefs and Volunteer Events at the Marine Lab in 2017

By Eric Milbrandt, Ph.D., Marine Laboratory Director

Following our initial efforts to restore oysters in San Carlos Bay in 2015-2016, we have received another grant (\$75,000) to restore oyster reefs. Our initial efforts built a total of three reefs; one large reef (1 acre) and two smaller reefs (0.5 acre). The new grant from the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) will be used to build another large reef, plus add substrate to another small reef.

It is thought that San Carlos Bay has lost 90% of its oyster reefs during the 1960s and 1970s. The reefs were used for road beds and you can still see the dredge footprints from these large extraction areas around Fisher-man's Key today.

It is possible to restore oyster reefs in the Gulf of Mexico and the Marine Lab has now successfully constructed reefs in Clam Bayou (2009) and San Carlos Bay (2016). The approach is to add shell to the intertidal (-0.25m to -0.75m) and wait for larvae to settle. The



Continued right below



Great North American Butterfly Count in July

Volunteers are needed for the Great North American Butterfly Count organized by the North American Butterfly Association (www.NABA.org). If you want to learn more about butterfly identification, join Dee at the Edison Estates on Saturday June 10 and/or at the SCCF Nature Center on Tuesday June 20 to prepare for the Great North American Butterfly Count in July. More info on Page 6.



Please Help Us Meet Our Goal

\$775K

WE'RE SO CLOSE!

2016-17 ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

We're almost at our Annual Fund Drive goal and — with your help — we're hoping to make it!

For more info, please call Cheryl Giattini at 239-395-2768, or Erick Lindblad at 239-472-2329.

Please contact Cheryl with questions and instructions for gifts of stock and wire transfers.

Thank you!

peak settlement is usually July-August.

We will be reaching out to volunteers on our website, through social media and in the newspaper to help us bucket and barge oyster shells to the reef sites.

The Marine Lab also has two very special partnerships with area restaurants The Timbers and Lazy Flamingo. These restaurants save all of the shucked oyster shells ordered on Sanibel and Lab staff picks them up every week. There is a big pile of oyster shells on our federal partner's land (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). The lab would like to thank J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge staff for allowing us to store our shells at the Gavin Site.

Miss the Mountains? Just Look at the Clouds

By Kristie Anders, Educator Director

In 1976, I was teaching in the Florida Keys. Some staff were lamenting the loss of mountain views and vistas compared to flat the topography of the islands. Quickly, our local sage, Luke Murtagh, replied "Need something high, just look at those clouds."

He was right, our clouds are spectacular. Frequently in the summer months, the ever-changing colors at twilight are more delightful reflecting off the clouds than the sun itself rising or setting.

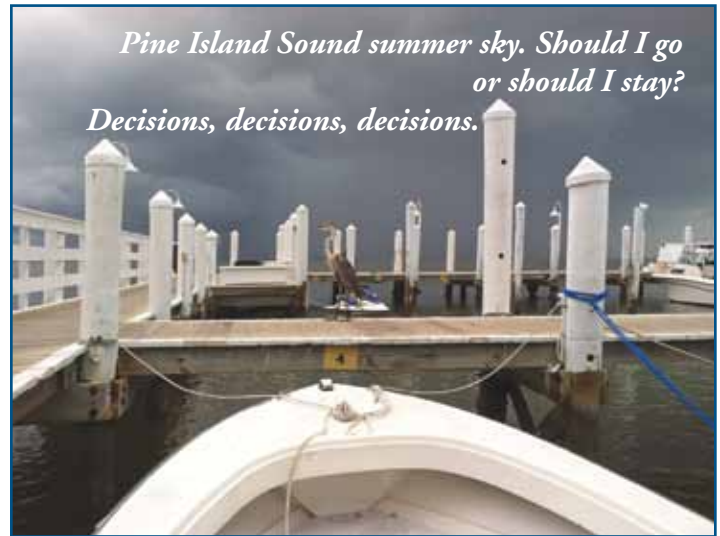
People ask if I miss North Captiva living and I respond that I miss the 180 degree view of the sky, day and night. Sometimes I would look out to see a cold, dark gray wedge of clouds sliding under warmer air and I knew the weather was about to change rapidly. I'd look at the direction and speed and calculate whether or not I could outrun its arrival to get home.

If I knew then what I know now, I might not have risked it quite so frequently. But in my defense, the will to go home is strong. I would sometimes crouch under the helm, peering out from behind the console so as not to be the tallest thing on the water. Silly me, I thought it would help.

What I know now is positive lightning discharges occur miles from the stormy rain. I was never aware there was both positive and negative lightning. Nor was I aware positive lightning is more powerful and more lethal — as in one billion volts and 300,000 amps discharging as much as 25 miles ahead of the precipitation.

Florida, particularly southwest Florida, is epicenter of some of the most active lightning in the world. Lake Maracaibo and Lake Victoria power up some vicious storms too. For us, it is heat lifting up from the interior of the state and being pushed west by the breeze from the Atlantic. As it approaches the Gulf Coast, the air mass collides with the weather generated where the land meets the Gulf.

Some storms form right over top of us so there's little notice. Thunder clouds to the east can climb fast to 40,000



and 50,000 feet. That high in the sky, they can be easily seen looming a hundred miles away. I watch as their tops flatten — the tell-tale anvil shape of a thunderstorm. This height is determined where the maximum changes in temperature and density occur. Positive lightning forms there.

If distant enough, the storm seems still, but then the wind picks up and pulls into the storm, there's a slight lull before turning 180 degrees and then the storm rushes forward. Time to take cover.

I enjoy watching clouds but I think I am a bit wiser with lessons learned: If you want to look at something high, look at the clouds. Positive lightning is more lethal and basically out of the blue. The invisible, powerful, positive lightning is well ahead of the storm. The billowing mountains of moisture grow and then avalanches of freezing clouds fall downward, pushing more warm air upward.

I miss the sky, but not the risk.

I cannot wait to see what Clyde Butcher, our Brush of Excellence honoree, captures on film this summer as he photographs the sky above some of SCCF's preserves. Clyde is the master of capturing clouds as Florida's topographical landscape.

On Your Own at the Nature Center

BUTTERFLY HOUSE

Learn about the life cycle of the Zebra Longwing, the state butterfly, on a self-guided tour of the Butterfly House.

WALKING TRAILS & OBSERVATION TOWER

Explore our four miles of walking trails through Sanibel's interior wetlands and climb our observation tower for a bird's eye view of Sanibel's ridges and swales.

WILDLIFE EXHIBITS

As part of the Nature Center exhibits, there is an interactive exhibit about water quality and SCCF's RECON sensors. There are a variety of "educational ambassadors" living in tanks. Take a look at Indie the endangered Indigo snake, Jewel the Diamond Back Terrapin, Happy the Florida Snapping turtle, Salty the mangrove water snake, Lucky the Florida Softshell turtle.

Another Barn Owl Sighting!

By Dee Serage, *Living with Wildlife Educator*

A Barn owl was sighted flying through the mist on a Sunday morning walk on the Shipley Trail at the Bailey Homestead Preserve on April 23. What a pleasant surprise... these days, good news stories are greatly appreciated!

Owl pellets had been found over the past winter season at the homestead. In fact — and much to the chagrin of those responsible for keeping the pavilion ready for SCCF events — one has been roosting at night in the pavilion rafters and leaving calling cards below.

The open grass area at the Homestead is a great hunting area for the Barn owl, with plenty of rats and rabbits to eat. One Barn owl can eat 1,000 rats... much better rat control than rat poisons that can kill the owls, hawks, eagles, or bobcats that eat the poisoned rats.

For the first time since 2005 a Barn owl was spotted at the Nature Center this winter. Owl pellets were found underneath the nesting box where they had raised chicks for 25 years.

Plans for a Barn Owl nesting box at the Homestead are in the works.

Between the Dunes and Beachview golf courses there is ample open hunting areas for a nesting population of



barn owls to grow and thrive on Sanibel's more populated east end. Let's use the beautiful barn owls for our rodent control instead of rat poisons.

To learn more about rat control safer for wildlife please contact Dee at 472-2329 or dserage@sccf.org.

Notes from the Homestead

Summer is here! Many of our seasonal residents are absent when the wonders of the Florida botanical world really liven up, as many of our plant species bloom in late Spring and Summer when they are out of town.

Not so with Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*)! Folks who return early in the Fall may get to experience the gorgeous spikes of bright yellow flowers if they're lucky. Once in full bloom, the flowers becomes a buffet for pollinators, and you can frequently see many different insect species on one plant alone.

Often the flower spikes extend above your head and can fall over due to the weight of the flowers. This can become a little cumbersome in the garden, though they can easily be staked up, propped up on a fence, or held up by neighboring plants. Plus the plants are so beautiful and attractive to insects that this slight shortcoming is easily tolerated. In addition, plants on drier sites are often shorter in stature because of the lack of water.

People often incorrectly blame this plant for seasonal allergies. In actuality, ragweed (*Ambrosia*) and its relatives are the culprits; many Goldenrods bloom during the same time and are more noticeable, and therefore are falsely accused. So enjoy the flowers worry free, without feeling guilty about contributing to your sneezes and sniffles!

- Jenny Evans, *Native Landscapes & Garden Center Manager*



A buckeye butterfly nectars on the Seaside Goldenrod's flowers.

SCCF June - July 2017 Program Schedule

BAILEY HOMESTEAD: MAKING THE LAND WORK

This one-hour walking tour of the Bailey Homestead Preserve blends SCCF's mission-driven work on the historic property, the history of the land itself and some stories about the Bailey family, which farmed the land for three generations. *Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. No reservations. 1300 Periwinkle Way, meet at the Conservation Gateway Kiosk at the head of the Shipley Trail, near the entrance. Call Kristie or Dee at 472-2329 for more information. Free to members and children. \$5 for non-members.*

BUTTERFLY PROGRAM IN PREP FOR JULY BUTTERFLY COUNT

Join Dee at the Edison Estates on Saturday, June 10 and/or at the SCCF Nature Center on Tuesday, June 20 to prepare for the Great North American Butterfly Count in July. Learn to identify the butterflies you will count in your backyard, at the wildflower and pollinator garden at the Bailey Homestead Preserve, and maybe even participate in the Edison Estates butterfly count in Ft Myers. To learn more about NABA go to www.NABA.org. Please call Dee at 472-2329 or e-mail her at dserage@scsf.org to attend.

CAPTIVA CRUISES

SCCF has a partnership with Captiva Cruises that offers a variety of waterborne experiences: The Dolphin & Wildlife Adventure Cruise narrated by SCCF Docents (4:00-5:30 daily), Cayo Costa State Park Beach & Shelling Cruise, Lunch Cruises to Cabbage Key, Useppa Island, Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island and Sunset Cruises. *Call Captiva Cruises for reservations and additional information. 472-5300. www.captivacruises.com.*

FIRE WITH A PURPOSE

Wildfire, controlled burn and prescribed fire are all different. SCCF uses prescriptive burns as a tool for managing the vegetation on some of the preserves. This tool makes the land more useful to some of our target species of wildlife including gopher tortoises and wading birds. It also reduces risk to island homeowners. *Come learn the difference on Monday, July 31 at 10 a.m. Members and children 17 and under are free. Cost is \$5 per adult, with members and children free.*

FLORIDA PANTHERS AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Florida panthers are the rarest mammals in North America – and their future depends on wildlife corridors. While not found on Sanibel, they play an important role in maintaining the ecosystems of Southwest Florida. The last few years have seen record-breaking panther deaths, but there is hope in protecting their habitat and allowing the elusive cat to spread north into its historic habitat. Prior to joining SCCF, Alexis Horn ran the Sierra Club's Florida Panther program. Learn what makes Florida panthers unique and why they are so vital to our environment. *Tuesday, June 13 and July 18 at 10 a.m. in the SCCF auditorium. Cost of the program is \$5 per adult, with members and children attending for free.*

GARDEN WALK AT THE HOMESTEAD

Take a guided walk through the the native plant, wildflower,

kitchen and tea gardens at the Bailey Homestead Preserve. Learn about the uses of the plants by humans, butterflies, birds and pollinators. You will end your wak with a sip of tea from the gardens infused with sea grape honey from the island. Meet for the walk on the deck at the Native Landscapes and Garden Center. *Thursday, June 8, 22 and July 6 at 9 a.m. Meet on the deck at the Native Landscapes & Garden Center. Free to members and children, \$5 for non-members.*

STORMY WEATHER: HURRICANES, WATERSPOUTS & LIGHTNING

Stormy Weather looks at some of this area's most lively weather phenomena including waterspouts, hurricanes and lightning storms. When Hurricane Charley roared in from the south in 2004, it made landfall on North Captiva, and hurricanes in the 1920s split Captiva and North Captiva into two islands. Wildlife, vegetation and human existence on these islands have always been shaped by tropical storms. *Monday, June 12 and July 10 at 10 a.m. Free to members and children, \$5 for non-members.*

A CENTURY OF PRESERVING PARADISE

A Century of Preserving Paradise celebrates the forward thinking of many people from the early 20th century thru today. The talk covers SCCF's 50 years and some of the lead-up to the incorporation of the City of Sanibel. Learn about many of the key steps islanders have taken over the past century, and what lies ahead with most pressing issues for the future of these emeralds in the sea. *Monday, June 26 and July 24 at 10 a.m. Cost of the program is \$5 per adult, with members and children attending for free.*

SHOREBIRDS OF SANIBEL & CAPTIVA

Join SCCF biologists to learn about the shorebird species that nest on our beaches, including snowy plovers, least terns and wilson's plovers. SCCF has been monitoring beach nesting birds on Sanibel since 2002. Learn how you can safely share the beach and help us protect our feathered friends. *Thursday, June 8, 22 and July 6, 20 at 2 p.m. Free to members and children, \$5 for non-members.*

TIDES, CURRENTS & SEA LEVEL

Whether it is shelling, fishing, boating, birding or just enjoying the view of the water, tides and currents affect most of our lives daily. Tides, Currents and Sea Level is an introduction to the oddities of tidal behavior and currents in the Gulf as well as what does it mean when the tide chart says 1.2' above sea level? Where is that? *Monday, June 19 and July 17 at 10 a.m. Members and children 17 and under are free. Cost is \$5 per adult, with members and children free.*

TURTLE TRACKS

Sanibel Island had one of the first sea turtle monitoring programs in the country. Learn about the life cycles and habits of the sea turtles and shorebirds that nest on our beaches, SCCF's monitoring activities, and what we are doing to protect them. *Thursday, June 1, 15, 29 and July 13, 27 at 10 a.m. in the Nature Center auditorium. Free to members and children, \$5 for non-members.*

SCCF

JUNE-JULY 2017

HAPPENINGS PROGRAMS OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 JUNE Turtle Tracks-10	2	3
			7 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	8 Garden Walk-9@BHP Shorebirds-2	9	10 Butterfly Count Prep-10 @ Edison Estate in Ft. Myers
11	12 Stormy Weather-10	13 Panthers/Corridors-10	14 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	15 Turtle Tracks-10	16	17
18	19 Tides & Sea Level-10	20 Butterfly Count Prep-10	21 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	22 Garden Walk-9@BHP Shorebirds-2	23	24
25	26 Preserving Paradise-10	27	28 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	29 Turtle Tracks-10	30	1 JULY
2	3	4 CLOSED JULY 4 PARADE	5 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	6 Garden Walk-9@BHP Shorebirds-2	7	8
9	10 Stormy Weather-10	11	12 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	13 Turtle Tracks-10	14	15
16	17 Tides & Sea Level-10	18 Panthers/Corridors-10	19 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	20 Shorebirds-2	21	22
23	24 Preserving Paradise-10	25	26 Making Land Work tour at Bailey Homestead-8:30	27 Turtle Tracks-10	28	29
30	31 Prescribed Fire-10					

All events are at the Nature Center (or meet at the Nature Center) unless otherwise specified.
BHP is Bailey Homestead Preserve.



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June - July 2017 Member Update



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SCCF Nature Center

3333 Sanibel-Captiva Road

(1 mile west of Tarpon Bay Road) / P.O. Box 839, Sanibel 33957

SCCF Nature Center and Main Telephone:

(239) 472-2329 Fax: (239) 472-6421 www.sccf.org blog.sccf.org

Native Landscapes & Garden Center: (239) 472-1932 (at the Bailey Homestead Preserve)

Marine Laboratory: (239) 395-4617

Wildlife & Habitat Management: (239) 472-3984

SCCF is dedicated to the conservation of coastal habitats and aquatic resources on Sanibel and Captiva and in the surrounding watershed through:



- *Environmental Education*
- *Land Acquisition & Stewardship*
- *Marine Research*
- *Natural Resource Policy*
- *Native Landscapes & Garden Center*
- *Sea Turtles & Shorebirds*
- *Wildlife & Habitat Management*

Nature Center Hours:

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. from October - May
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. from June - September

Native Landscapes & Garden Center Hours:

at 1300 Periwinkle Way, Bailey Homestead Preserve
Monday - Friday — 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday from 10 a.m. — 3 p.m. *(January through April)*

Visit our Nature Center

- Trails & Observation Tower
- Butterfly House
- Education Center

\$5/adult, children under 17 free, members free.

Find the latest real-time water quality readings from our RECON sensors at www.recon.sccf.org

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