

CONSERVATION FLORIDA

THE POST

// WINTER 2018

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WE ARE CFL

Shaping the future as
Conservation Florida

// 04

BIOBLITZ

Counting on
the Corridor

WILDLY POPULAR

BIODIVERSITY

EXPLORING LIFE IN *WILD* FLORIDA



From the *Executive Director*

WE'VE HAD AN EXCITING, impactful last few months! With the support of a top-quality professional staff and a fully committed board of directors, I am pleased to say we are becoming a stronger and more versatile organization by the day.

In August, we underwent an important rebrand, updating our name from Conservation Trust for Florida to Conservation Florida. This change reflects our forward progress and momentum. It's also easier to say and remember, which will better serve our mission to protect Florida's natural and agricultural lands. It's short, it's sweet, and it explains what we do and where we do it.

In October, we hosted our inaugural statewide bioblitz, and it was a hit! Our bioblitz welcomed people from all backgrounds to explore the natural world, engage in science, and connect with some of Florida's most special places. We invited Floridians to join us at three locations to count and photograph as many species as they could spot. From guided kayaking tours to swamp buggy adventures, we had a great turnout and logged some rare species along the way.

We knew that capturing a snapshot of our State's biodiversity could only happen if we approached the event in a big way. So, we went statewide. We planned to feature a coastal habitat to encounter the annual monarch butterfly migration, a sand pine scrub forest with a first magnitude spring, and a dry prairie, but Hurricane Michael had other plans and hit our coastal location days prior to the bioblitz. This forced a postponement at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge location. We hope to host our bioblitz there next year, and in the meantime, we offer our assistance and support to our friends in the Panhandle. Our remaining two events are highlighted in this issue.

As we continue to expand our programs and services, know this: Conservation Florida remains as dedicated as ever to protecting Florida's special places. We're committed to achieving meaningful land protection, serving as a trusted partner, advocating effectively for conservation and conservation funding, and educating policymakers, leaders, and our fellow Floridians about the importance of conservation here in Florida.

We believe the future is bright. Why? We have you on our side, and together, we can do great things. From the Florida Panhandle to the Everglades Headwaters, we have land conservation projects that are truly shaping Florida's conservation future. In fact, the large, statewide projects we target have global significance and will help protect some of the rarest habitats and species in the world.

As an incredible year comes to an end, I can't wait to share with you all that's on the horizon for 2019. Stay tuned!

For Florida,



Traci Deen, Esq.
Executive Director



“From the Panhandle to the Everglades Headwaters, we have land conservation projects that are truly shaping Florida’s conservation future.”

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MISSION

We protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.



We Are Conservation Florida

Recent name change puts greater focus on conservation

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED there's something a little different about us! We are now doing business as Conservation Florida (CFL). We're excited about the new name because it clearly represents what we do and where we do it! The shorter name is more descriptive, straightforward, and memorable.

The name change is part of a broader outreach initiative to communicate our mission to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

We have also updated our mission, vision, and website. Additionally, we've created new marketing materials with the help of a grant from the Land Trust Alliance.

Conservation Florida is experiencing a time of great transition marked by growth and progress, and this name change reflects just that. Last year, we hired new leadership and recommitted to working on statewide land conservation projects with a focus on large conservation lands and the corridors that connect them. Today, the organization is working on over 30 active projects totaling



Above: Our mission is to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes. It is our hope that protected lands will form a statewide conservation corridor, support the success of working family farms and ranches, and contribute to a healthy economy.
Photo by **CARLTON WARD**
Left: CFL's refreshed logo.

more than 180,000 acres.

Conservation Florida is proud of our history, and we look forward to a very bright future as an effective, trusted partner in the work of saving Florida, forever.

Since our founding in 1999, CFL has been instrumental in helping to protect over 25,000 acres throughout the state. More than half of that acreage has been protected during the last five years.

As Conservation Florida grows to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead, we remain an accredited land trust committed to long-term stability, sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.

So, remember, when you think about conservation in Florida, think of us – Conservation Florida!

Butterflies to Black Bears

Statewide bioblitz highlighted Florida's biodiversity

OUR FIRST BIOBLITZ – *Counting on the Corridor* – brought together an incredible group of land protection partners, expert naturalists, and citizen scientists from across the state. The event successfully connected people with the beauty and biodiversity of two conserved locations within the Florida Wildlife Corridor — Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and Ocala National Forest's Alexander Springs Recreation Area.

BIOBLITZ

People from all backgrounds explored the land, engaging in science and learning about some of Florida's most special places. They also collected valuable data that could help protect plants and animals that make up Florida's unique ecosystems. Though many wonderful scientists joined us and shared their knowledge, no scientific background was necessary to participate. In fact, our youngest participant was just over a year old!

We wanted our bioblitz to capture a snapshot of Florida's biodiversity. To accomplish this, we approached the event in a big way. The sites we selected included a sand pine scrub forest with a first magnitude spring and a dry prairie filled with some of the rarest species on the planet.

Scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members worked together to count as many plants, animals, fungi, and other organisms that they could spot. More than 100 registered participants recorded nearly 400 observations! A total of 197 species were identified, including some very rare plants and insects.

Participants enjoyed guided hikes, kayak tours, swamp buggy rides, snorkel tours, botany lessons, and archaeological walks led by experts. Kid Zones entertained children with fossils, coloring, and interesting wildlife lessons. Participants also learned more about how Conservation Florida is saving land within the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Overall, it was a wonderful day outside! We hope you'll join us at our next bioblitz.



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// 1: A participant at the Kissimmee Prairie bioblitz takes a picture with his phone to upload to iNaturalist for identification. Photo by ED PERRY // 2: Photographed at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park (KPPSP), Crested Caracara are a federally threatened species and tend to inhabit wet prairies or rangelands. Photo by ED PERRY // 3: Observed at KPPSP, Berry's skipper (*Euphyes berryi*) is a globally imperiled species of butterfly. It has been historically found in wet areas from North Carolina to Florida. Participants Edward Perry and Rachel Warner documented 44 species of butterflies at KPPSP during our bioblitz. Photo by ED PERRY // 4: Participants enjoyed guided swamp buggy tours. // 5: Celestial Lily (*Nemastylis floridana*) being photographed and logged in iNaturalist. Photo by ED PERRY // 6: Participants at KPPSP enjoyed guided kayak tours on Spring Creek in the Ocala National Forest. // 7: A family fun event, the bioblitz welcomed children to the Kids Zone to learn and explore. // 8: Photo by STEPHANIE DUNN

CONSERVATION FLORIDA

works statewide



FROM THE FLORIDA PANHANDLE to the Everglades Headwaters north of Lake Okeechobee, Conservation Florida's land protection projects are shaping Florida's conservation future. In fact, the large, statewide projects that we are working on have global significance and will help protect some of the rarest habitats and species in the world.

Our landscape-scale work creates, expands, and links conservation lands. We focus on projects that provide habitat for the survival of Florida's iconic species, recharge drinking water or benefit other hydrologic functions, offer outdoor recreation, and have other community benefits. We also help landowners with working ranches, farms and timberlands keep their land in production for generations to come.

Three of our completed land protection projects are highlighted below. To date, we have helped protect more than 20 projects totaling over 25,000 acres!

Adams Ranch



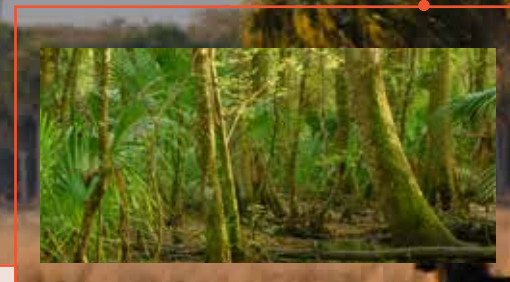
Conservation Florida worked with the Adams Ranch over the last five years to protect over 5,400 acres of land via the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. In addition to allowing the family to carry on its ranching heritage and contributing to Florida's agricultural economy, these lands include over 400 acres of rare dry prairie habitat suitable for the federally endangered grasshopper sparrow. Other significant natural areas include, wetland prairie, marsh, freshwater forested wetland, and mixed scrub habitats.

Photo by **RANDY BATISTA**

Price's Scrub

Silver Springs Forest

Silver Springs Forest



Partnering with the St. Johns River Water Management District, Conservation Florida raised \$488,000 to close a funding gap, save the land, and leverage \$11 million in state and federal funds for the purchase of this 4,800-acre forest. Funding partners included the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, the Felburn Foundation, the Moskovitz Foundation, and individual donors. This key parcel adds to the existing network of conservation lands surrounding Silver Springs, which includes Indian Lake State Forest, Ocala National Forest, and Silver Springs State Park.

Photo by **CARLTON WARD**

Price's Scrub



Working with the state Office of Greenways and Trails, Conservation Florida helped protect Price's Scrub, a unique 952-acre sand pine and pond pine ecosystem with saw palmetto understory. The park is open to the public for light recreation such as hiking and horseback riding. It also provides an important connection in the conservation corridor between Payne's Prairie State Preserve and Goethe State Forest.

Photo by **FLORIDA STATE PARKS**



Every act of giving has a story...
What's Yours?



Photo by RANDY BATISTA

“I was raised on (and by) the lakes, rivers and forests of north Florida. They are who I am, something I am eternally grateful for. I am passionate about Conservation Florida because it is a way I can express my gratitude and give them voice.”

—
 Ed Montgomery
 Conservation Florida board member

“Giving to a cause like Conservation Florida is reflective of our value set and the culture we strive for as an organization. We are appreciative of the opportunity for work to allow donations to occur and look forward to the solar industry playing a key role in the preservation of the Florida we all cherish.”

—
 Benjamin Pauluhn
 President, Optimus Solar

Optimus Solar provides accessible energy solutions for individuals and businesses investing in their financial futures, families and communities. As part of their overall commitment to serve clients, employees, owners, the community, and the environment, they donate a portion of the profits from every job to Conservation Florida.



Be a gamechanger.
Invest in conservation.

There are many ways to support conservation. If you want more information about any of these giving options, please contact us at info@conserveflorida.org.

- make a tax-free transfer from your IRA
- donate appreciated stocks
- donate your credit card reward points
- select Conservation Florida when you shop Amazon Smile
- start your own fundraiser for us on Facebook
- give monthly or quarterly
- ask your employer about matching gifts
- donate property or goods
- donate via your donor-advised fund
- name CFL as a beneficiary in your will
- volunteer with us

Top: Conservation Florida's vision is a Florida where protected lands support healthy populations of native plants and wildlife, like the Florida Scrub Jay pictured above. Photo by CHUCK PALMER
 Left: Sunrise on the Kissimmee Prairie. Photo by STEPHANIE DUNN



Gifts in memory & in honor of others

We wish to thank all of our supporters and volunteers. We wouldn't be here without you. Here, we share your messages of love, grief, and gratitude. The following tributes were made between 4/20 - 9/20/2018.

In memory of:

John Browne

Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
 Tall Timbers Land Conservancy

Keith Fountain; "In memory of John Browne, my colleague and friend, who for over 15 years was a leader in preserving natural and agricultural lands in Florida. You will be missed for your contributions to conservation, our long conversations, and your relationships with landowners, but your accomplishments will last forever."

Philip Leary; "In memory of my friend and true conservationist John Browne. John lead the FDACS Rural & Family Lands Program since its inception and was a great man, advocate, and leader for conservation and agriculture."

Linda Regenfuss

John Regenfuss; "She loved all creatures great and small."

Nathaniel G. Harrison III

Bernard Egan Foundation
 Cri Hilmer; "In honor of - my friend."
 Christine McGrath
 Harry Quatraro
 Lynn McGrath
 Nancy Jean Davis
 Quail Creek Plantation; "Forever in our hearts!"
 Robert and Maura Soule
 Stephen Pearson

In honor of:

Ed Montgomery

Joe Montgomery; "My big brother and conservation guide who is protecting the geography of our childhood for future generations."

Florida Artists and Horsemen

Gary Borse
Gary Borse - Robert Lee Peter Gearen

Griff & Linda Jones; "Celebrating your 70th trip around the sun. With love."

The talented Board of Directors of CFL

Lisa & Peter Gearen; "In gratitude for hard work, intention, and faith."

Staff Spotlight:

Jessica Modriskey

JESSICA JOINED OUR TEAM IN JUNE! She is a recent graduate of Florida State University where she double-majored in Environmental Studies and Geography and minored in Urban and Regional Planning. Before joining Conservation Florida, she spent a year interning with the Florida Fish and Wildlife's Bear Management Program. During this time, Jessica found a love for conservation and wildlife management through data management, fieldwork, and outreach. She also spent time working at Disney's Animal Kingdom where she advocated for Disney's Conservation Fund.

Growing up a military child, away from her family's home state of Florida, Jessica has an acute appreciation for Florida's natural beauty and unique wildlife. She enjoys hiking, kayaking, and spending time outdoors.



"I have always hated the question "where are you from?" because I never knew how to answer it. Being raised in a military family, a "hometown" never really existed. The only place that has ever felt like home was my beautiful state of Florida.

I grew up loving the tall pines and the thick saw palmetto. I dreamed of seeing panthers and manatees. I longed for the day I could permanently call Florida my home. To this day, I love being able to see a beautiful coastline, crystal-clear springs, thick swamps, or open prairies all in one state.

Florida has been, and will always be, my home. I'm dedicated to saving wild Florida so future generations can enjoy all the beauty that I've been lucky enough to experience in my lifetime.

I feel lucky to be a part of Conservation Florida. This team is truly dedicated and highly motivated to protect natural and agricultural lands for future generations."

Florida's emerging trends and natural resource solutions. This means CFL will be better prepared to serve you in protecting Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

CFL's Executive Team Chosen for Prestigious Leadership Programs

Our executive director, Traci Deen, was recently selected as a member of Leadership Florida Connect Class IX. Deen joins 43 other young leaders from across the state to participate in the 9-month program, which was created to educate, engage, and inspire Florida's top young professionals. Leadership Florida Connect is the state's only leadership program that spans industry boundaries and focuses solely on developing Florida's existing and emerging leaders. "Leadership Florida Connect is blazing a trail for the future of Florida. Connect will give the next generation of leaders the tools they need to act now to facilitate change for years to come and make Florida a better place." - Jon Levinson, Past Chairman, Leadership Florida
Cyndi Fernandez, our assis-

tant director, is a current Natural Resource Leadership Institute (NRLI) fellow. NRLI is a specialized leadership training program for natural resource professionals. Over the course of eight months, fellows learn about contentious issues such as endangered species, land use, marine resources, and water use. The program brings together professionals from many sectors and provides them with training to find inclusive solutions to Florida's dire natural resource problems. The curriculum offers on-the-ground tours to experience issues firsthand, expert briefings, experiential training in collaborative decision making, and engagement with stakeholders. Participation in these programs puts Conservation Florida's leadership team at the forefront of



Eastern Meadowlark in flight, photographed at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. Photo by ED PERRY

BIOBLITZ

Thank You

We wish to thank all who participated including the following volunteers and organizations who donated their time and expertise in making the day a huge success:



- Alexander Springs Recreation Area
- Florida State Parks
- Florida Wildlife Corridor
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- Umatilla Chamber of Commerce
- Friends of Kissimmee Prairie Preserve
- American Land & Leisure

- Alan Rivero
- Alexandria Grant
- Andre Naranjo
- Andrea Bonvecchio
- Andrew Marbury
- Anthony Melton
- Blaire Lakatos
- Cassandra Ward
- Cody Kerr
- Danielle Jordan
- David Harder
- David Rakes
- Don Morrow
- Emily Hesterman
- Emma Tighe
- Gigi DelPizzo
- Ivonne Antonian
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- Hughes
- Leah Norris
- Liz Sparks
- Megan McClauthery
- Michael Stanfield
- Pam Soltis
- Dr. Paul Gray
- Peter Kleinhenz
- Robert Emond
- Sarah Barrett
- Scott Bayer
- Scott Davis
- Shayna N. Jacques
- Tierney Shimansky
- & ALL participants

Conservation Florida

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Conservation Florida, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit land trust. The mission of Conservation Florida is to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

Saving Florida. For Nature. For People. Forever.

Conservation Success: Sampala Lake Update

OUR SAMPALA LAKE LAND PROTECTION PROJECT consists of two large ranches that border the 115-acre, spring-fed lake. Totalling 2,172 acres, the land has been used for agriculture, ranching, and forestry for over 80 years. It is now home to two cattle/calf operations, but also contains high-quality wetlands, provides aquifer recharge benefits, and extends wildlife corridors.

Sampala Lake is also the historical site of San Pedro y San Pablo de Protohiriba, one of the five missions established by the Spanish between 1609 and 1655.

Phase one was protected in early 2018, and the remaining acreage has been approved by the Florida state cabinet. Closing is anticipated soon. Located in Madison County, this project will complete the Sampala Lake landscape, and in doing so, truly protects a piece of Florida history forever.

For more details about Sampala Lake, please visit conserveflorida.org news.

On the
Cover



Photo by **STEPHANIE DUNN**

Lilium catesbaei, observed at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park on Oct. 20, is a native of Florida and a state-threatened species. It is also known as Catesby's lily, pine lily, leopard lily, tiger lily, or southern-red lily and usually grows in damp areas.

Below Photo by **RANDY BATISTA**

