

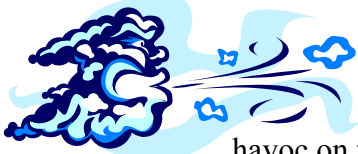


Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 10, Number 3

Fall 2004



Charley, Frances and Jeanne Batter MINWR

The unwelcome arrival of three guests named Charley, Frances and Jeanne wreaked havoc on the Refuge, causing an estimated \$6 million dollars worth of damage. Each storm caused some damage, but the cumulative effect of the three storms in a 6-week period caused serious damage to Refuge dikes. The storms also damaged some facilities, ripping off shingles and siding, causing closures of the Refuge and all facilities, and directing most of our Refuge work to clean up and repair efforts. The most serious damage occurred to our dikes and each successive storm seemed to do more damage than the previous one.

The Shiloh Marsh Road, located near the headwaters of the Indian River Lagoon, took the biggest hit. The storms pushed waters of the Indian River Lagoon northward, causing the water level to rise more than 5 feet. The subsequent storm surge swept over many sections of the dike, washing away whole sections of the dike and much of the new road material. This same 12-mile section of Shiloh Marsh Road had been damaged by hurricanes Francis and Irene in 1999 and has been under construction for about a year. The construction was due to be completed in mid-September when the storms hit. The cumulative effect of the three storms seriously damaged about half of the dike, costing an estimated \$2 million in repairs. Some emergency repairs have been made, but as of this publication, we are not sure when construction to rebuild the road will resume.

Wave action caused erosion on several other dikes, including the Cruickshank Trail, Peacocks Pocket Road, Catfish Creek Road, West Gator Creek, Max Hoeck Creek and L Pond Road, which are all closed until emergency repairs can be made. *(Continued on page three)*



Washed away dike. Photo by Sammy Clark, USFWS.



Breached area of Shiloh Marsh Road. Photo by Richie Myers, USFWS.



Another sea turtle nest washed away by the storms. Photo by Mike Simmons, USFWS.



Caution, Flooding. Photo by Cheri Ehrhardt, USFWS.

Message from the President

This is my last message to you as president of MIWA. I will be stepping down after our annual meeting on November 3, 2004, at the Dixie Crossroads Restaurant. A new president will take office in December of this year. It has been an exciting and eventful two years. We have accomplished several worthwhile projects and we have several still to be achieved. The most ambitious project, the Black Point Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project, is moving forward through the signing of a contract with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for matching funds in the near future. MIWA has asked for an increase in matching funds from our original request of \$50,000 to \$100,000. The additional funds will give us \$200,000 for the project. If approved, the increased funding will pay for permanent restrooms on Black Point Wildlife Drive and an observation tower on Scrub Ridge Trail, which is home to a large population of the threatened Florida Scrub Jay.

The past two years have given me the opportunity to work closely with the staff at MINWR, especially Ron Hight Refuge Manager, Dorn Whitmore, MIWA Liaison, and Nancy Corona, Refuge Ranger. I found all of them to be very professional and dedicated to the Refuge. I have also been privileged to work with our excellent sales store manager (and Jill of all trades), Sandee Larsen. I would like to thank all of the board members of MIWA for their support and participation. They have been a good group to work with.

I will continue to work as a volunteer at the Refuge and look forward to working on other refuge projects.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president.

Warren Camp

MIWA President



The purpose of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.

President	Warren Camp
Vice President	Dan LeBlanc
Treasurer	Jim Pedersen
Secretary	Darleen Hunt
President Emeritus	George English

Board Members

Sam Beddingfield, Jim Butts, Judy Dryja, Chris Fairey, Bud Ferguson, Robert Hutchison, Forrest McCartney, Joel Reynolds, Lorenz Simpkins, Lee Solid, Ned Steel, Diane Stees, Laurilee Thompson, Ron Thorstad & John Tribe

Refuge Manager	Ron Hight	USFWS Liaison	Dorn Whitmore
	NASA Liaison	Mike Sumner	

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) is a nonprofit, cooperating association for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. *Habi-Chat* is published quarterly. For membership, MIWA or Refuge information, call **321-861-0667**.

Newsletter Editor Beth Homa **Technical Consultant** Sandee Larsen
Habi-Chat **Committee** Beth Homa, Sandee Larsen & Dorn Whitmore

Gifts in remembrance were donated by...

...Donna & Paul Atkins, Jerry & Darleen Hunt, Stephen & Yvonne Coester, John & Melinda Tribe, John Sterritt, Dr. Kenneth & Dr. Barbara Murray, MPS/SSME Engineering Group U.S.A., Jerry & Madelyn Hyde, Simone Spies, Friends at Shands (University of Florida), Michael & Deborah Orr, Ron & Marlene Hippensteel and Marie Prescott for **Robert Bowman**. Robert had a long career at the Kennedy Space Center and retired as the manager of the Main Propulsion System on the space shuttle. He spent many hours enjoying Black Point Wildlife Drive with his daughter, Dawn. He passed away on August 21, 2004.

Donations in remembrance of loved ones and friends can be sent to MIWA, PO Box 6504, Titusville, FL 32782.



(Hurricanes, continued from page one)

In addition to the wave damage, the storm blew down many trees and limbs and flooded most low lying areas, forcing the closure of all trails. With the exception of Palm Hammock and Cruickshank Trail, all trails have reopened. The downed trees broke some sections of boardwalk on Oak Hammock Trail and the kiosk roof was damaged. Some siding at the shop was torn off, most large signs were down or leaning and the large garage doors on the equipment building at the St Johns NWR were blown off the building. Other than this, most facilities came through the storm with little damage.

The impact of the storms on wildlife is harder to document. Refuge beaches were hard hit and most stakes that mark the location of turtle nests were washed away, along with many nests. These storms are always hard on the hatchlings that have made it out into the ocean and are washed back onto the beach by the 30-foot seas and high winds. Most of these hatchlings do not survive. Sea birds that ride out the storms on the ocean also suffer. Many of



One of many dead birds found on the beach after the storm. Photo by Mike Simmons, USFWS.

the bird nesting islands took a beating, with high winds knocking over nest trees and waves washing away parts of the islands. In the interior uplands, many large trees were blown down, including old cavity trees that birds and mammals use. Although we seldom see wildlife impacts from these storms, it's reasonable to assume that some do not survive. On the positive side, we had a lot of beneficial rain. Our only source of freshwater is rainfall and our impoundments are brimming with freshwater, which will be welcomed by the arriving winter migrants.

Dorn Whitmore, Refuge Ranger



Palm Hammock Trail under water after the storms. Photo by Cheri Ehrhardt, USFWS.



A refuge boundary sign almost underwater after the storm. Photo by John Ross, USFWS.



MIWA Membership Drive

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association will begin a membership drive November 1, 2004. The goal is to double our current memberships. MIWA will partner with Delaware North Parks and Resorts (DNPR), the Brevard Zoo, and the Space Coast Audubon Society (SCAS). DNPR will develop and print the new brochure, and the Zoo and SCAS will supply mailing lists. MIWA Board Member, Chris Fairey, has applied for a grant from the NFWF. If approved these funds will be used to offset the cost of printing, mailing lists, and postage. The new brochure will be available at the VIC as well as posted on the website. We encourage members to get the word out to their friends and families. Thanks for your support!

Dates to Remember

- Nov. 3 **MIWA Annual Meeting** Dixie Crossroads
- Nov. 6 **Brevard Watercolor Society Event** VIC
- Nov. 10 **Volunteer Fall Social** VIC
- Nov. 17-21 **Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival**
- Dec. 20 **Christmas Bird Count** MINWR

Upcoming Events

Bird Tours

Free bird tours will begin in November and run through March. For more information and tour dates call 321-861-0668 or visit the refuge website at www.merrittisland.fws.gov.



MIWA Minute

It has been a summer of loading and unloading boxes of retail stock due to the many hurricanes that threatened the Gadwall (MIWA's storage shed). A BIG THANK YOU to volunteers **Bob Sleczkowski**, for emptying the Gadwall many times, **Edward Larsen** for replacing the stock and MIWA Board Member, **Clay Hutchison** for patching the Gadwall's roof after Hurricane Frances.

I am happy to report that we are still receiving donations towards the Black Point Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project. The project is still in the planning phase and matching funds are still available. We have received a total of \$16,393.25 in funds, passing our goal of \$15,000! Thank you to the following who have recently donated towards this popular project:

Donna & Paul Atkins

Jim Butts

Paul & Robin Davis

Manuel & Robin Diaz

Sandy Edmondson

Wanda & James Graf

Alan & Lee Hemenway

Ron & Marlene Hippensteel

Jerry & Madelyn Hyde

Kerri Lambert

Martin, Linda, & Lauren Lesser, MD

Phyllis Menken

Drs. Kenneth & Barbara Murray

Michael & Deborah Orr

James & Carol Pedersen

Marie Prescott

Lee & Shirley Solid

Simone Spies

Peter & Mary Stangel

John Sterritt

Laurilee Thompson

John & Melinda Tribe

Richard & Jean Tweed

Friends at Shands, University of FL

MPS/SSME Engineering Group, USA

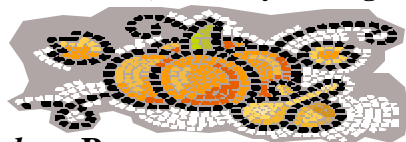
Herbert & Mary Lou Wilson



If would like to make an in kind or monetary donation, please contact the MIWA office at 861-2377.

See you at the Refuge!

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager



Bookery Buys

Ornamental Gourds by Yvette's Creative Concepts, range in price from \$35.99 to \$39.00. Each gourd is beautifully hand-painted by a local artist, depicting various wildlife species.

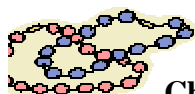
Brass and marble decorative accents by San Pacific International. Includes sea turtle statue (\$49.99), sea turtle large garden chimes (\$29.99) and manatee small garden chimes (\$12.99).



Nature inspired jewelry by Grass Shack

Trading starting at \$3.99 and up.

For boys and girls.



Children's Books

"Bird Calls". Innovative Kids. Interactive book with authentic bird calls and pull tab illustrations. \$19.99. A wonderful educational gift for children.

"The Ultimate Sticker Books". A new series of informative and fun sticker books. Publications include: Butterflies, Reptiles, Sharks & Whales, Birds and Glow in the Dark Ocean. \$6.99 each.

Show your MIWA membership card to receive your 10% discount on all purchases!



Photo by Jason Vehrs, USFWS.

New Public Use Intern

After canceling her trip south twice to avoid hurricanes Frances and Ivan, the Public Use Program's new intern, Amanda Harford, arrived. She has a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Amanda has plenty of experience; she has worked for the Department of Natural Resources Bureau of

Endangered Resources Wolf Damage Payment Program and she studied salmon in Bamfield, British Columbia. Amanda is a great asset to the Refuge so please make her feel welcome!

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager

Park Bench Program

MIWA recently received a \$400 donation for the Park Bench Project from **Doctors Edward Drew and Pamela Buitendorp Drew** of Crystal Lake, IL. Their bench will be assembled and placed on the VIC boardwalk with a plaque located nearby. This generous donation completes the VIC boardwalk.

However we are still in need of Benches for the Hammock, Scrub Ridge and Cruickshank Trails. If you are interested in learning more about the program please call 321-861-2377.



Wild Things

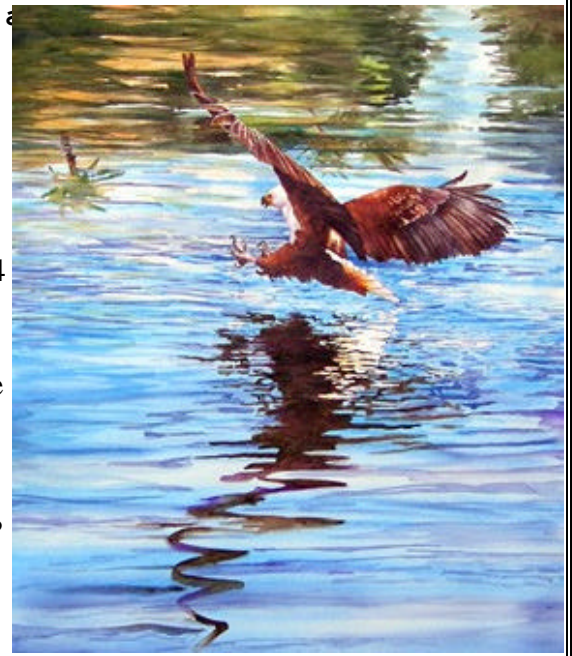
The Brevard Watercolor Society (BWS) will present the second Annual Wild Things exhibition with all new paintings at the Refuge Visitor Center beginning in November. Last years' exhibit was a terrific success with the sale of 15 of the 50 paintings, as well as many prints.

This year's exhibit will feature 25 original watercolor paintings depicting Florida wildlife primarily seen on the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Wild Things will be on exhibit from November 5, 2004 through January 31, 2005. The paintings will be offered for sale with a portion of the proceeds to be donated to MIWA. Smaller prints of the paintings will also be available for sale. This will be a juried show by the BWS, which has many accomplished artists among its 200 members.

An opening reception will be held on Saturday, November 5 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. MIWA members are cordially invited to attend the reception. In order to plan for refreshments we ask that you please RSVP to 861-2377 by November 2.

This activity is a great example of MIWA partnering with other organizations in the community to achieve its goals. Many of the BWS artists are now MIWA members, including one life member!

Darleen Hunt, MIWA Secretary and BWS Artist



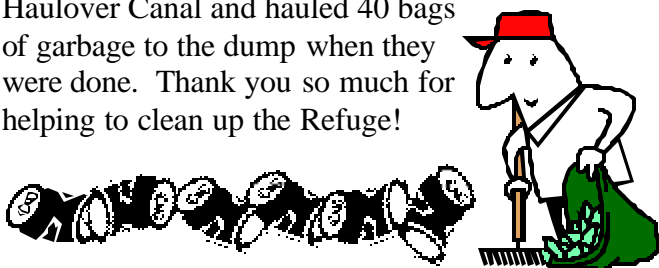
One of the paintings on display in last year's exhibit by 1st place winner Witha Lacuesta.



Photo by Dale Carlisle.

Trash Bash at the Refuge

A Trash Bash was organized at MINWR by the North Brevard Sportsmen Association. Dale Carlisle and 30 volunteers (a few pose in the above photo with some of the trash they removed) spent several hours on August 28th picking up trash around the Refuge. They spent the majority of their time at Haulover Canal and hauled 40 bags of garbage to the dump when they were done. Thank you so much for helping to clean up the Refuge!



Species in focus...American Redstart

- It is finally the time of year when migratory season
- begins and suddenly the hammocks are filled with small
- birds. For many birders, these smaller species are easily
- identified, but, for an amateur birder like me, the warblers
- and vireos move about too fast for my untrained eye! Lucky
- for all of us, there is one species out there that is easily
- recognizable for every eye. It is the American redstart.



The redstart is a beautiful little wood-warbler that is common in forests with small understory trees, especially where it's wet.

Several have been seen along the boardwalk behind the Visitor Center recently. It has a black head and back with a white breast while it's

- throat, wings, and tail are
- accented by a bright orange-red color. Redstarts splay out
- their tails and show off the bright red color both in courtship
- displays and while chasing insects through the trees.

- This winter, while you are taking a leisurely stroll along
- the boardwalk, be sure to keep your eyes and ears open for
- all those small birds. Even though they are little, they are
- very charismatic and a joy to watch. Keep a lookout,
- especially, for the colorful American redstart.

Amanda Harford, MINWR Intern

Welcome Home

It's a sure sign of fall. A large dark silhouette appears against the sky. The flash of brilliant white in the sun and the slow, strong wing beats confirm your expectation: the eagles are back! And no matter if you have seen it one thousand times before, the thrill is still the same. Welcome home!

The bald eagle was adopted as our national symbol in 1782, when there were approximately 50,000 eagles residing in the lower 48 states. By 1963, only 834 eagles remained in the lower 48. Habitat loss, habitat degradation, and pesticides were blamed for the drastic declines, and bald eagles were federally listed as Endangered in 1978. On KSC/MINWR, over 100 nests were documented each year in the late 1800s, but the numbers of nesting pairs dropped steadily to a low of four or five nests per year throughout the mid-50s until 1990. A gradual recovery began in the U.S. at that time, and bald eagles were reclassified from Endangered to federally Threatened in 1995. There are currently about 5,000 bald eagles living in the U.S., with 800 of those nesting in Florida. Since 1996, the number of nests on MINWR has consistently been 12 to 14 each year.



The nest on SR 3. Photo courtesy of NASA.



Two eagles sitting on one of the utility poles on SR 3. Photo courtesy of NASA.

Helicopter surveys of nesting territories have been conducted on MINWR since 1993. Two or three are flown each season and the data collected include GPS points of nest locations, number of adults present at or near each nest, and the number and status of eggs or offspring. These data are entered into a Geographic Information System (GIS) for analysis and map production. The final reports are distributed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NASA, the National Park Service, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Many people are wondering what effect our zany hurricane season will have on this year's eagle nesting population. Our most well known and visible nest, the one on SR3 south of the Vehicle Assembly Building, appears to be in good condition and at least one adult has been seen sitting in the nest tree. The status of the remaining nests and territories will not be known until the first survey is flown later in the winter, so stay tuned for future updates. In the meantime, keep your eyes open for that familiar, but nonetheless spectacular figure, and be sure to say "Welcome Home!"

Rebecca Smith, Wildlife Ecologist, Dynamac Corporation

Service Director Visits Refuge

US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams toured the refuges damaged by hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne on October 12-14, 2004. Damage estimates for Service managed lands are over \$44.4 million. The Director ended his hurricane tour week at Merritt Island NWR on the 14th with a helicopter tour of the Refuge, a visit to damaged and repaired portions of Shiloh 5 dike, a tour of NASA facilities, and a Refuge BBQ at NASA's Astronaut House. The BBQ gave the Director a chance to relax from his busy trip and socialize with staff. Sammy Clark, Maintenance Supervisor, regaled all in attendance with swamp cabbage and his wonderful chicken and ribs!

Cheri Ehrhardt, Refuge Planner



Shiloh 5. Photo by Marc Epstein, USFWS.



Steve Williams. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

Refuge Staff News

Hello to...

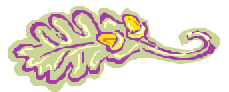
Amanda Harford is the new Public Use Intern at the Refuge.

Goodbye to...

Mandy Stanford. Mandy has headed back to Texas. Mandy was the Public Use Intern at the Refuge and will be greatly missed.

Mike Simmons. Mike was the Sea Turtle Biological Technician. He leaves us to pursue permanent employment.

Richie Myers, the former Assistant Manager over the Fire and Maintenance Program, leaves us for Egmont Key NWR.



The Brevard Nature Alliance Presents The 8th Annual SPACE COAST BIRDING & WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

November 17-21, 2004

Brevard Community College - Titusville, Florida

**MORE THAN 40 FIELD TRIPS
PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP
BOAT TRIPS
BIRDING & WILDLIFE SEMINARS
& WORKSHOPS
PADDLING ADVENTURES
NATURE BASED TRADE SHOW
ART COMPETITION**

FEATURING:

Pete Dunne

Director, Cape May Observatory

Arthur Morris

World-renowned photographer

Herb Hiller

Noted Florida tourism critic and author

Brian Harrington

Recognized authority on shorebirds

Dr. Jerry Jackson

World-renowned woodpecker expert

Kevin T. Karlson

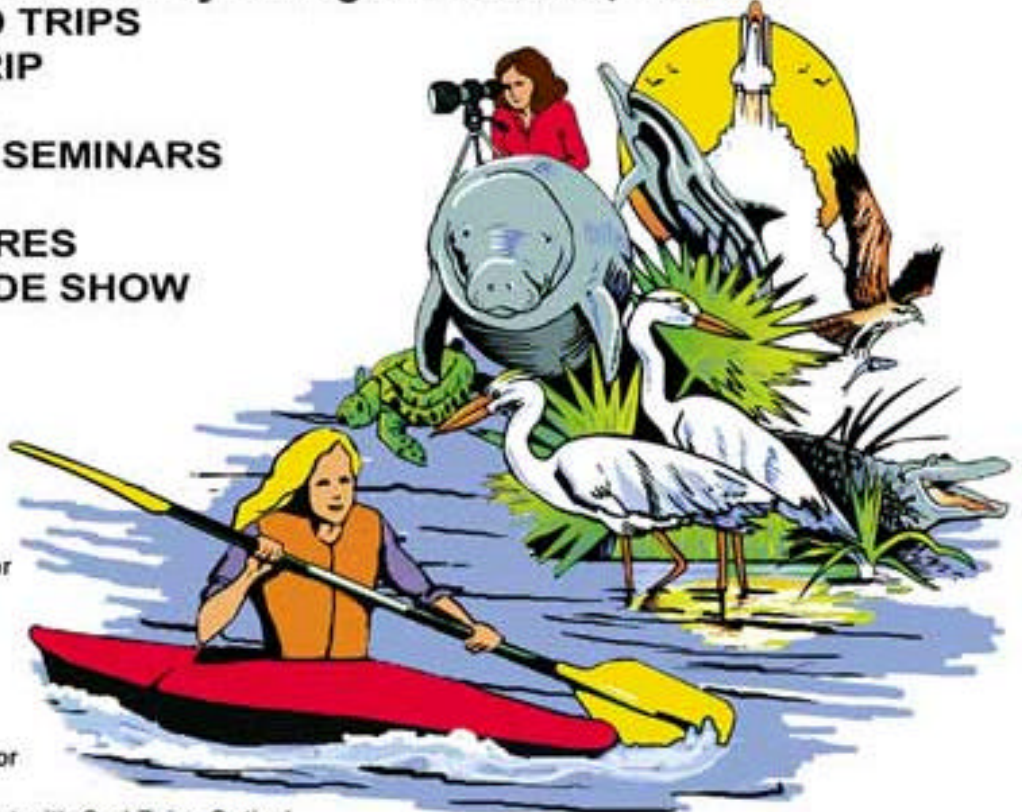
Noted wildlife photographer and author

Stephen Ingraham

Birding & wildlife observation specialist with Carl Zeiss Optical

Jeff Bouton

Product Specialist for Leica Sports Optics Birding/Naturalist Markets and raptor expert



Whooping Crane Conservation Association Annual Meeting at the Festival

Whooping Crane Presentations & Field Trips Open to the Public

WC KEYNOTE PRESENTERS: BRIAN JOHNS, Canadian Wildlife Service WC Coor. @ Wood Buffalo NP

TOM STEHN, US FWS WC Coordinator

Both lead the Whooping Crane International Recovery Program

Best Western Space Shuttle Inn
Host Hotel for the
2004 Festival
1-800-523-7654

For more information contact:
Neta Harris - 321-268-5224
neta@natureandspace.com

Visit the Festival Web Site at www.nbbd.com/flv

Melbourne International Airport
Host Airport for the
2004 Festival



Visitor Center Hours

Monday through Friday

8:00 am – 4:30 pm

Saturday and Sunday*

9:00 – 5:00 pm

***VIC is closed Sundays from April – October**

The Refuge is open daily from Sunrise-Sunset.





You are cordially invited to attend
MI WA's 11th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, November 3, 2004
7:00 pm

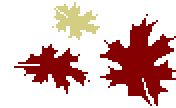
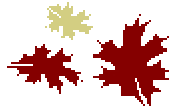
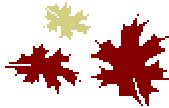


Dixie Crossroads Restaurant

(1475 Garden Street, Titusville. From US 1 in Titusville, turn west onto Garden Street/
SR 406. The restaurant is less than a mile down the road on the left.)

Agenda topics include the annual financial report, Board Member elections, Black Point
Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project and Refuge update. There will be refreshments and
door prizes. The Annual Meeting is a great way to meet fellow members and become more
involved in the Association. We encourage all members to attend and look forward to
seeing you there!

Regarding MI WA elections, the Nominating Committee will present a slate
of officers and returning Board Members. Nominations may also be taken
from the floor the night of the Annual Meeting. Please call
George English at 321-783-1108 for more information.



Merritt Island Wildlife Association
P.O. Box 6504
Titusville, FL 32782
www.nbbd.com/npr/miwa/index.html

