



# Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 12, Number 3

Fall 2006

## 2006 Annual Meeting a Great Success



**MIWA Members Mingle with Refuge Staff.**

Photo by Joel Reynolds

The 2006 Annual Meeting was a hit with over 130 members in attendance. Members were treated to a full agenda of reports and presentations. MIWA Vice President Lee Solid served as master of ceremonies. Lee gave the floor to Board Member and Nomination Committee Chair George English for the Board of Director's officer and member nominations. All current board members whose terms expired this year have agreed to serve for another two-year term. Officers nominated are listed.

<b>Dan LeBlanc</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Lee Solid</b>	<b>Vice President</b>
<b>Jim Pedersen</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Joel Reynolds</b>	<b>Secretary</b>

George called for additional nominations from the floor. None were presented. A vote was taken and all board member and officer nominations were approved unanimously. Officers will be voted in at the November MIWA Board meeting.

The remainder of the evening consisted of: MIWA Treasurer's Report by MIWA Secretary Joel Reynolds; Refuge Update by Refuge Manager, Ron Hight; Black Point Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project Update by Board Member Warren Camp; MIWA Membership Drive Update and Grant Update by Board Member Lorry Simpkins; Upcoming Field Trip Report by Refuge Operations Specialist Dorn Whitmore; Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival Update by Board Member Laurilee Thompson; Brevard Watercolor Society Art Event by Board Member Darleen Hunt; a *Habi-Chat* update by editor Brad Sloan; a Bookery report by Bookery Manager Sandee Larsen; and a presentation on the West Indian Manatee by Mike Walsh, Director of Veterinary Medicine at Sea World.



**Bidding in the Silent Auction.**

Photo by Joel Reynolds



**Mike Walsh Treating a Sick Manatee.**

Photo Courtesy of Sea World

Members also enjoyed a live animal display from the Brevard Zoo, appetizers, and a fund-raising dinner. Silent auction items were up for bid and were awarded. Over \$2,500 in funds were raised through the auction (see Page 4 for a list of winners and donors). Thank you to all who attended, donated items, and participated in the silent auction! A big thank you to Dan LeBlanc at Delaware North Parks and Services for hosting the event and to his Assistant, Tiffany Fairley, for helping to coordinate the evening's activities! And thanks to the Brevard Zoo for coming out and to Mike Walsh for such an in-depth and fascinating presentation.

**Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager**



## MIWA Minute

MIWA is happy to announce our newest Life Members, **Bill & Natalie Walls, Jo Lynn Nelson,** and **Peggy Dolan**. Bill & Natalie of Mims have been Senior Couple members for many years and have decided to make it permanent. Thanks! Jo Lynn's father and MIWA Life Member, Roy Roberts, Sr., gave her a life membership as a birthday gift. Thanks Roy for thinking of MIWA! Peggy, a former snow bird, has been a volunteer at the Refuge for over 15 years and is moving permanently to her northern home in Whitefish Bay, WI. She has put in endless hours on the VIC desk over the years and will be greatly missed. Good luck in WI, Peggy!

We are also happy to announce our newest corporate sponsors, **Clifton A. McClelland, Jr., P.A** and **Brevard Nature Alliance**. Mr. McClelland's office is located at 1901 S. Harbor City Blvd, Suite 500, Melbourne, FL. The Brevard Nature Alliance is a non-profit organization that presents the annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival. As Life Members and Corporate Sponsors they all will receive benefits, including discounts on field trips and educational programs and purchases at the Bookery Gift Shop. We encourage all members to support our corporate sponsors, become actively involved in our programs, and promote membership to your friends and families.

MIWA sends a big "THANK YOU" for donation support from Life Members **Roby & Sue Buckalew** of Rockledge (\$200) and Senior Member **John Milani** of Daytona Beach Shores (\$500). We are honored to have such generous, thoughtful members. And again we would like to thank Andy Bankert for his continued support of over \$1,100. If you would like to make a donation please contact the MIWA office at 321-861-2377 or send a check to: MIWA, PO Box 6504, Titusville, FL 32782. All donations are tax deductible and can be earmarked for any project or program on the Refuge.

See you at the Refuge!

**Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager**



**Dorn Whitmore Accepting a Donation from Andy Bankert.**

**Photo by Sandee Larsen**



*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.*

<b>President</b>	Dan LeBlanc
<b>Vice President</b>	Lee Solid
<b>Treasurer</b>	Jim Pedersen
<b>Secretary</b>	Joel Reynolds
<b>President Emeritus</b>	George English

### Board Members

Sam Beddingfield, Jim Butts, Warren Camp, Dan Click, Judy Dryja, Chris Fairey, Bud Ferguson, Darleen Hunt, Robert Hutchison, Forrest McCartney, Lorenz Simpkins, Ned Steel, Laurilee Thompson, Ron Thorstad, John Tribe

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

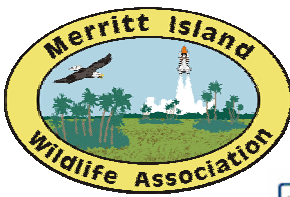
The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) is a nonprofit, cooperating association for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The *Habi-Chat* is published quarterly. For MIWA information, call **321-861-2377**.

**Newsletter Editor** Brad Sloan      **Technical Consultant** Cheri Ehrhardt  
*Habi-Chat* **Committee** Brad Sloan, Sandee Larsen,  
Dorn Whitmore, Cheri Ehrhardt  
**Official Photographer** Joel Reynolds

## Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors

Allen Engineering  
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Brevard Nature Alliance  
C. Cowan-Overbeck, Ear Care, P.A.  
Coldwell Banker Cornerstone Realty  
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L & D Consulting  
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Clifton A. McClelland, Jr., P.A.  
Norman Ray  
TLC Engineering  
United Space Alliance





## MIWA Accomplishments FY 2005/2006



### Refuge Support/Funding:

- Public Use Intern Scholarship Fund
- National Wildlife Refuge Week Open House Event
- International Migratory Bird Day Event
- Fall Refuge Volunteer Trip to the *Marine Science Center & Ponce Lighthouse*
- Over 400 Solo Hours VIC Desk Support Provided
- Spring Refuge Volunteer Recognition Event to *Forever Florida*

### Funding for Refuge Projects:

- VIC Butterfly Garden Project (signs)
- VIC Bird Feeders & Seed
- Lunch Funds for Two Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge Clean Ups
- New File Cabinet for VIC Desk
- Refreshments for Annual Scrub-jay Survey
- Refreshments for Titusville Art League Exhibition Reception
- Funding for the Cooperative Conservation Listening Session

### MIWA Projects:

- MIWA Members 2005 Annual Meeting Program: Presenter Steve McCullough, Indian River Dolphins: Their Health, Their Future
- Brevard Watercolor Society 2005 Art Reception and Exhibit
- Annual Christmas Bird Count

### Bookery Highlights:

- Purchased New Gadwall for Retail Storage
- Purchased New Office Accounting Computer
- Acquired autographed publications by authors: Marc Minno, Susan Cerulean, Holly Ambrose, Dr. Ray Ashton, and Brian Harrington, and by photographer Neil Fifer



### Donated to Others:

- \$100 to the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute
- \$500 to FWS Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund
- Books & T Shirts for Refuge Christmas Family (\$60 value)
- Public Use Intern Thank You Gift Bags
- Weldon Gift/Birding Bags
- \$50 to Archbold Biological Station
- \$50 to the Nature Conservancy
- Retired & Senior Volunteer Program Lunch Funds & Goodie Bag Gift (\$25 value)

### Acquired:

- Silent Auction Items for 2005 Fund Raiser (raising \$1,400)
- Bird Seed Donations from Titusville Wal-Mart
- Keep Brevard Beautiful Grant for BPWDEP
- Andy Bankert's Nikon/Space Coast Coastal Cuckoos World Series of Birding Fundraiser Recipient (over \$1,100)

### Member's Only Field Trips:

- Merritt Island NWR Historical Tour
- Lake Wales Ridge NWR and Archbold Biological Station Overnight Trip
- Lake Woodruff NWR and DeLeon Springs State Park Field Trip
- 7 Merritt Island NWR Birding Tours
- 2 Merritt Island NWR/Canaveral National Seashore Sea Turtle Walks
- Merritt Island NWR Hammock Walk and Lagoon Seining Tour

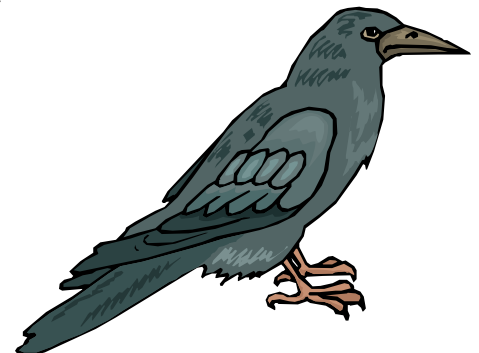
### Other MIWA Projects:

- *Habi-Chat* Quarterly Newsletter
- Website



**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR ANNUAL MEETING SILENT AUCTION DONATORS AND WINNERS:**

Jerry Hunt:	2 Combo Dinners donated by <b>Miguel &amp; Bertha Sanchez of El Leoncito Restaurant</b> Champagne Reception donated by <b>Jackie Gambill of Sterling Casino Lines</b> Family Passes donated by <b>Tracy Suiter of Old FL Museum</b> Admission for 4 donated by <b>Molly Eberyold of St Aug Alligator Farm</b> (Lg) Shirt donated by <b>The Fly Fisherman</b>
Cheri Ehrhardt:	Oil Painting donated by <b>Kristina Becker</b> 1/2 Day Fishing Trip for Four donated by <b>Captain Neil Goodrich of Fishing Frenzy Charter Service</b> Lovell Package donated by <b>Dan LeBlanc of KSC Visitor Complex (DNPS)</b> Hand Knitted Scarf donated by <b>Betty Camp</b>
Fred Moos:	Day Fishing Trip donated by <b>Captain John Turcot of Backcountry on Fly</b> One Night Suite Getaway Certificates donated by <b>Michelle Martindale of Cocoa Beach Comfort Inn</b> One Night Suite Getaway Certificates donated by <b>Michelle Martindale of Cocoa Beach Comfort Inn</b> (XL) Shirt donated by <b>The Fly Fisherman</b>
Margaret Towe:	Family Passes donated by <b>Tracy Suiter of Old FL Museum</b> 4 Hopper Tickets & Basket donated by <b>Julie Murphy of Disney</b> \$25 Gift Certificate donated by <b>Mike Williams of UNO Chicago Grill</b> \$25 Gift Certificate donated by <b>Michael O'Brian of Kloiber's Cobbler &amp; Eatery</b>
Brian Waldron:	2 for 1 passes donated by <b>Deb Batt of Brevard Zoo</b> Kayak Trip for 2 donated by <b>A Day Away</b> (SM) Shirt donated by <b>The Fly Fisherman</b>
Betty Salter:	Two Night Stay donated by <b>Tom Williamson of Courtyard By Marriott-Cocoa Beach</b> Hand Knitted Scarf donated by <b>Betty Camp</b>
Darleen Hunt:	Hand Knitted Scarf donated by <b>Betty Camp</b> Hand Knitted Poncho donated by <b>Betty Camp</b>
Ed Larsen:	Two Night Stay donated by <b>Pat Looney of Residence Inn Cape Canaveral</b> Two Night Stay donated by <b>Tom Williamson of Hampton Inn-Cocoa Beach</b>
Margo Sloan:	Gift Basket donated by <b>Laurilee Thompson of Dixie Crossroads</b> Watercolor Print donated by <b>Mary Ann Theis</b>
Mary Ann Theis:	2 for 1 passes donated by <b>Deb Batt of Brevard Zoo</b> \$25 Gift Certificate donated by <b>Wal-Mart</b>
Roy Roberts:	(Lg) Dress donated by <b>The Fly Fisherman</b> Basket Of Avacados donated by <b>Jerry Hunt</b>
Laurilee Thompson:	Acrylic Print donated by <b>Yvette Whitmore of Yvette's Creative Concepts</b> Butterfly Palm Art donated by <b>Sonia Larson of Palm Tree America</b>
George English:	Wine Holder w/ Chardany donated by <b>Laura Capozzi</b> Decanter donated by <b>Lynn Watson</b>
John Boucher:	\$25 Gift Certificate donated by <b>Michael O'Brian of Kloiber's Cobbler &amp; Eatery</b> Hand Knitted Scarf donated by <b>Betty Camp</b>
Ron Hight:	One Night Suite Getaway Certificates donated by <b>Michelle Martindale of Cocoa Beach Comfort Inn</b>
Ana Maria Vieth:	KSC Gift Basket donated by <b>Dan LeBlanc of KSC Visitor Complex (DNPS)</b>
Kathy King:	Gift Basket donated by <b>Laurilee Thompson of Dixie Crossroads</b>
Lorry Simpkins:	\$20 Gift Certificate donated by <b>Rusty Fisher of Rusty's Seafood</b>
Fred Vieth:	Bird House donated by <b>Jim Butts of Jim's Dollhouse &amp; Gifts</b>
Mike Ramer:	Family Passes donated by <b>Tracy Suiter of Old FL Museum</b>
Warren Camp:	½ Day Fishing Trip for One donated by <b>Captain Mark Wright</b>
Joel Reynolds:	2 for 1 passes donated by <b>Deb Batt of Brevard Zoo</b>
Joyce Stefancic:	Birdfeeder donated by <b>Laura Capozzi</b>
Judy Reynolds:	2 for 1 passes donated by <b>Deb Batt of Brevard Zoo</b>
Lynn Watson:	Horse Head donated by <b>Cassie Veltman</b>
Melinda Tribe:	4 Watercolor Cards donated by <b>Mary Ann Theis</b>
Mike Walsh:	Stained Glass Lamp donated by <b>Laura Capozzi</b>
Mrs. Thorstad:	Hand Painted Silk Scarf donated by <b>Darleen Hunt</b>
Sally Hutchison:	2 Matted Wildlife Photos donated by <b>Joel Reynolds</b>
Sandy Snowe:	2 Day Passes donated by <b>Sea World Orlando</b>





## 2006 Sea Turtle Nesting Season

What a year for sea turtles! Our target species *Caretta caretta* (loggerhead), *Cheloni mydas* (green), and *Dermochelys coriacea* (leatherback) continued to return to our beaches. From May 15 to October 2 we documented a total of 663 loggerhead nests and 535 loggerhead false crawls; 90 green nests and 106 green false crawls; and 1 leatherback nest. Numbers are down from last year for all species. This is probably due to a number of reasons, including surveyors being excluded from all or part of the beach because of hazardous operations, shuttle launches, and inclement weather. Our nest marking scheme was such that we marked every 10<sup>th</sup> loggerhead nest, every green nest, and every leatherback nest from May 15

to August 31. Thus, we marked a total of 65 loggerhead nests, 79 green nests, and 1 leatherback nest.



**Loggerhead Leaving After Laying.**  
Photo by Volunteer Paul Reichard

Although we have not lost many nests, we did lose some to predators and storm events. Depredations were up from last year; however, this may have to do with our limited access to the beach which reduced our trapping efforts. A total of 74 nests – 69 loggerhead and 5 green – were depredated by a variety of species including raccoons, ghost crabs, bobcats, coyotes, and wireworms (click beetle larvae). Of those, 9 of our marked nests were depredated – 6 loggerhead and 3 green – and 3 loggerhead nests resulted in complete losses. We also lost 6 of our marked nests – 3 loggerhead and 3 green – to various storm fronts that caused high tides followed by beach erosion and significant dune scarping. Thankfully, so far, we have been spared the destruction wrought by previous years' hurricanes.

Be sure to catch the action next year by watching a loggerhead nest on one of the MIWA Members-Only Sea Turtle Walks!

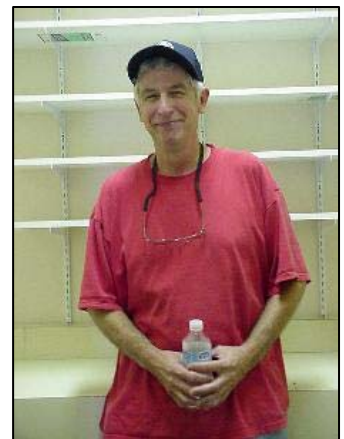
Angelique DeLong, Refuge Biological Science Technician



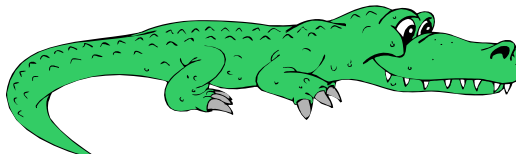
## Retired Seniors Volunteer Program Volunteer of the Year

The day Wayne Preston started volunteering at the Refuge, he hit the ground running. His mechanical and craftsman skills are superb and he generously wields his talents on a variety of Refuge projects. He is a man with seemingly unlimited energy: power washing the entire outside of the Visitor Center, remodeling and painting closets, building a new leaflet box, and repairing planks on the boardwalk. These are just a sampling of the projects Wayne has undertaken. The Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, an agency that refers retired volunteers to the Refuge, annually hosts a volunteer recognition. This year the Refuge staff proudly nominated Wayne. The Refuge is a safer and more efficient place because of Wayne's dedication, talents, and hard work. Thank you Wayne!

Nancy Corona, Public Use Ranger



**Volunteer Wayne Preston.**  
Photo by Nancy Corona



## Brevard Watercolor Society 3rd Annual Art Exhibit

MIWA is hosting the third Annual Wildlife Watercolor Exhibit by members of the Brevard Watercolor Society at the Refuge's Visitor Center from November through January. About 40 watercolor paintings depicting Brevard fauna and flora will be displayed in the Visitor Center's auditorium. This is a juried show of original paintings that will be offered for sale with a portion of the proceeds donated to MIWA.

An opening reception for the artists will be held on Sunday, November 12, from 2 to 4 p.m. MIWA members are cordially invited to attend. In order to plan for refreshments we ask that you please RSVP to 321-861-2377 no later than November 7<sup>th</sup>.

Darleen Hunt, MIWA Board Member



**2005 BWS Winner "Nesting Time".**  
By Artist Kiki Davidow

## Overview of the Draft CCP & EA



A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is meant to provide direction and guidance to refuge management over the 15-year life of the plan. The CCP for Merritt Island Refuge addresses several priority issues raised by the Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, other governmental partners, and the public, including: the spread of exotic, invasive, and nuisance species; the threats to threatened, endangered, and other imperiled species; the threats and impacts of an ever increasing human population and the associated demand for public use activities; the management/maintenance of impounded wetlands; the coordination between intergovernmental partners; and the decline in migratory birds and their habitats. To address these priority issues, four alternatives were developed and evaluated in the Environmental Assessment (EA) during the planning process: Alternative A (current refuge management),

Alternative B (threatened and endangered species), Alternative C (migratory birds), and Alternative D (wildlife and habitat diversity).

Alternative D outlines the proposed action. It takes a more landscape view of the Refuge and its resources, focusing Refuge management on wildlife and habitat diversity. Under this alternative, the Refuge would support 500-650 Florida scrub-jay family groups with 350-500 territories in optimal conditions across 15,000-16,000 acres; 11-15 nesting pairs of bald eagles; 6.3 miles of sea turtle nesting beaches with a nest depredation rate of <10%; 100 acres of habitat for the southeastern beach mouse; regular manatee patrols and four slow speed zones; and the re-establishment of wood stork nesting. The Refuge would manage 15,000-16,000 acres in impounded wetlands with a waterfowl focus, with targets of 250 breeding pairs of mottled ducks, 60,000 lesser scaup, 25,000 dabbling ducks, and 38,000 other diving ducks. Over 2,500 acres of impounded wetlands would be managed with a shorebird focus and over 1,500 acres would be managed with a wading bird focus. Further, the Refuge would restore 1,200 acres of impounded wetlands and evaluate an additional 3,100 acres. The control and elimination of exotic, invasive, and nuisance species would be increased. At least 4,000 feral hogs would be trapped and removed each year.

Visitor services, programs, and messages would be focused on wildlife and habitat diversity, while also including threatened and endangered species and migratory birds. Visitor facilities would include two information kiosks, the Visitor Center, two observation towers, Black Point Wildlife Drive, five trails, the manatee observation deck, and 131 miles of publicly accessible dikes and roads (where ~21 miles would be seasonally closed from November through March), while adding four observation towers, two 10-person observation blinds, ADA restrooms on Black Point Wildlife Drive, six canoe/kayak trails, a rookery viewing complex, and three bicycle trails. The waterfowl hunt area would be expanded. And a deer and feral hog hunt would be developed. Further, the Refuge would develop an estuarine fishing program with pole/troll zones, ethical flats fishing materials, and regular law enforcement patrols. And, the Refuge would develop a freshwater fishing program. Environmental education, interpretation, and outreach activities would increase. Commercial fishing guides would be capped at 70.

Refuge administration activities would be expanded, including a proposed increase to 61.5 full-time employees. And, commercial harvesting activities would be phased out over a 10-year period.

In summary, the CCP was developed based upon the selection of Alternative D as the preferred alternative. The actions outlined in the CCP and in the two included step-down plans provide direction and guidance for future management of Merritt Island NWR. Successful implementation will depend on coordination and partnerships between the public, the Service, and other governmental agencies. Following public review and comments on the Draft CCP and EA, the service will develop the final CCP to guide management.



## Comment on the CCP!

If you haven't already heard, the Refuge began the development of a 15-year management plan, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), with public scoping back in 2002. And, the Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Merritt Island Refuge will soon be available for public review and comment. The documents will be available in a variety of ways.

- Stop by the Refuge's **Visitor Center** to view or pick up a paper or CD copy.
- Go to <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning/>, select "Draft Documents", and scroll down to Merritt Island Refuge.
- Visit one of several **local libraries**: A Max Brewer Memorial Law Library (Moore Justice Center, Viera), West Melbourne Public Library, Cocoa Beach Public Library, Merritt Island Public Library, Mims/Scottsmeer Public Library, Edgewater Public Library, and New Smyrna Beach Regional Public Library.



If you have any comments on the Draft CCP and EA for the Refuge, please send your letter or email to: Merritt Island NWR CCP, PO Box 6504, Titusville, FL 32782-6504 (mail); 321-861-1276 (fax); or MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov (email). Make sure to include your name and address on all comments submitted. And, please call us with any questions or for more information: 321-861-0667.

**Cheri M. Ehrhardt, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, USFWS**





**Florida Scrub-jay.**  
**Photo by Joel Reynolds**

## *Species in Focus:* The Future of Scrub-jays?

Scrub-jays, the only bird endemic to Florida, face an uncertain future. State-wide, the species has lost 70% of its habitat and they are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Merritt Island Refuge supports one of the best remaining scrub-jay populations and they have been identified as a focus species in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). So what is the Refuge doing to protect scrub-jays?

We may take Scrub-jays for granted at Merritt Island, but this is only one of three mega populations in the world (Ocala National Forest and the Lake Wales Ridge are the other two locations). The main threat to scrub-jays state-wide is development. Developers' insatiable appetite for dry home sites and the need to protect these homes from wildfires has eliminated large blocks of scrub-jay habitat and reduced the population by more than 50% over the last 100 years. In 1993, the state-wide population was estimated at 4,000 families. Brevard County, at that time, had one of the best populations with 374 breeding pairs on the mainland and about 850 pairs on the Refuge and the Cape (about one-quarter of the state's population). The building boom over the last decade has not been kind to the mainland populations in Brevard. However, with 550 breeding pairs, the population on the Refuge has held its own because the habitat has been protected and properly managed with fire.

During the development of our 15-year CCP, the Refuge has recognized how critical the Refuge is to jays and has made it one of the focus species for management activities. Our target is to maintain between 500-650 families across about 15,000 acres of Refuge land. To accomplish this goal, the Refuge must burn between 3-5 thousand acres of scrub habitat each year and restore about 5,000 acres through cutting old-growth scrub, allowing it to regenerate. The restoration will create corridors, helping to link four distinct populations found across the Refuge. A good example of this restoration can be seen south of Haulover Canal where a scrub corridor is being created to link scrub-jay families north and south of the Canal.

Another important management tool is monitoring the jay population. The Refuge staff and volunteers accomplish this with an annual spring survey which takes over 45 people 3 days to walk 165 survey routes. Last year the survey yielded 550 families.

It is clear, state-wide scrub jays are declining due to the loss of scrub habitat and the difficulty in burning private lands. It will be more difficult to sustain these smaller isolated scrub-jay populations. However, management activities on the Refuge, Ocala National Forest, and Lake Wales Ridge should be adequate to sustain these mega populations. The Refuge population is vital to the recovery effort and is widely regarded as the best population. The Refuge is helping the Cape manage scrub with fires and the service has made the scrub-jay a management priority on the Refuge. This means the jay's future looks bright on Merritt Island.

**Dorn Whitmore, Refuge Operations Specialist, USFWS and James Lyon, Refuge Biological Science Technician, USFWS**



**Searching for Food.**  
**Photo by Joel Reynolds**



**The Skimmer at Haulover Canal.**  
**Photo Provided by Captain Doug Floyd**

mysterious light. We floated along the Indian River Lagoon for a couple of hours, enjoying the pleasant weather and company, and we marveled at the beauty and mysteries of nature. A big "Thank You" goes out to Captain Doug for the spectacular trip!

Captain Doug conducts bioluminescence tours for the general public in addition to several other natural history pontoon boat tours. For more information please call Captain Doug Floyd at 321-267-4551 or visit the website: [www.SpaceCoastNatureTours.com](http://www.SpaceCoastNatureTours.com).  
**Nancy Corona, Public Use Ranger**

## **Nature's Night-lights**

Captain Doug Floyd of Space Coast Nature Tours generously treated the Refuge's volunteers to a free trip to observe nature's night-lights. Forty-five volunteers, the crew, and Refuge staff set off from the Titusville Municipal Marina at just about dark. We didn't have to wait long to witness the spectacular natural event. As the pontoon boat passed docks and moored boats, passengers witnessed a dazzling display. Hundreds of streaks of greenish phosphorescent light dashed through the water like lightning, as a large school of fish moved away from the boat.

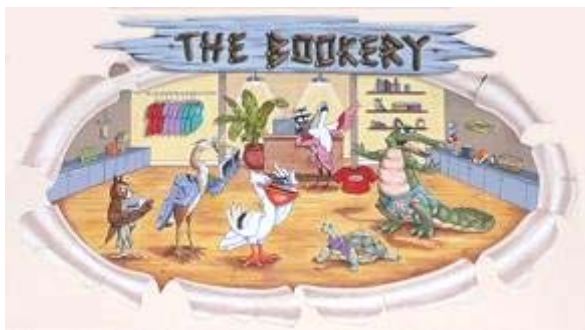
This natural phenomenon is called bioluminescence. Many plant and animal species living in the Indian River Lagoon have the ability to create this "cold light". Millions of algae called dinoflagellates, produced this aquatic fireworks display. As the fish moved through the water, they stirred the dinoflagellates, which created a chemical reaction within them that produced the

## 2006 Christmas Bird Count

The 2006 Christmas Bird Count at MINWR will be held on Monday, December 18, 2006. Anybody interested in participating should contact count coordinators Ned Steel at 321-452-1140 or Jim Pedersen at 321-267-4981 for more information.



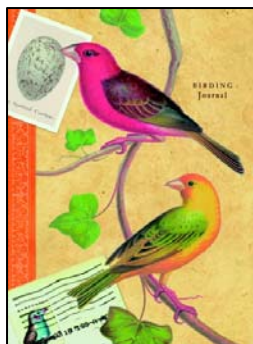
## New Items in



### Birding Journal

by Potter Style.....\$10.95

A practical field notebook and treasured keepsake in one, this portable journal is the ideal place for recording both memorable and every-day bird sightings. Complete with guided entries sprinkled with illustrations, quotes, and bird facts, as well as sections for sketching and keeping a life list, this journal is a necessity for birding amateurs and experts alike.



### River Otter Adult T-Shirt

by Wild Cotton.....\$17.00-\$1800

Sizes SM – XXL. Available in dark blue only.



### Canvas Tote Bag

By Wild Cotton.....\$15.95

Beautiful shorebird print with each species listed.

## Visitor Information Center Hours

Monday through Friday

8:00 am – 4:30 pm

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

\*VIC is closed Sundays from April-October

The Refuge is open daily from Sunrise-Sunset, except during Shuttle Launch/Landing operations.



*Hello to...*

... **Susan Waldron**, one of our Thursday Crew Volunteers, will be the new MIWA seasonal Sales Associate.

Susan has worked temporarily for the Refuge as an administrative assistant as well as loading supplies for hurricane preparedness.

## Welcome Back to...

... **Mike Legare**, a Wildlife Biologist. Mike comes to us from Lower Suwannee Refuge in north Florida where he was a Deputy Manager. Before that, he was a Biologist at Mattamuskeet NWR. He previously worked at MINWR as a Biological Science Technician. Mike is currently looking for a house in Titusville with his wife, Stephanie, and their three sons.

... **Kathy Whaley**, additional Deputy Refuge Manager, along with Ralph Lloyd. Kathy transferred from Lower Suwannee NWR. She will be living in Titusville and is looking forward to paddling and exploring the Refuge's backwaters. Kathy previously worked at MINWR, beginning in 1990 and was the very first member of MIWA.

## Goodbye to...

... **Angelique DeLong**, a Biological Science Technician who was working with wildlife. She worked on the Refuge's seasonal sea turtle surveys.

... **Stephanie Odom**, the temporary Office Administrator and who previously worked as a secretary for Boeing and Dynamac.

... **Marc Epstein**, Refuge Biologist Marc Epstein worked at the Refuge for 10 years and left a lasting mark, particularly on the management of our wetlands. During his tenure he supervised the restoration of 500 acres of wetlands and the reconnection of 14,600 acres of impounded wetlands to the lagoon. He also developed an ingenious locking devise which prevented vandals from tampering with Refuge water control structures. Marc was a gifted photographer and took thousands of images of the Refuge. Some of his images found their way into several regional and national magazines.

He worked closely with Refuge volunteers in collecting wildlife information in the wetlands which was used to confirm his water level management strategies. Marc made the management of the waters of Black Point Wildlife Drive a priority to insure optimum wildlife viewing conditions. For this, he endeared himself to many visitors. Farewell Marc and good luck in your new position as Refuge Manager of the Santee NWR in South Carolina.



## Dorn Gets Crocked

The Refuge VIC had an unusual visitor this summer. A crocodile was dropped off at the Refuge by Ann Spellman of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the Biology Program to identify and relocated to southern Florida. It was a great opportunity to see this reptile up close.

**Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager**



Young American Crocodile.

Photo by Sandee Larsen

## “Our Florida” A Multi-Media Art Exhibit a Success

During the summer months, area artists had an opportunity to display their favorite impressions of Florida at the Visitors' Center. Over 50 pieces of art by 26 artists were on exhibit and for sale.

Volunteers Betty and Warren Camp, Mary Ann Theis, and artist Marry Ann Morris took on the challenge of hanging the paintings, stained glass and photography. Thanks to Warren's height, the job was much easier! Besides the hanging art, we had pottery, gourds painted as frogs, and a seven-foot crane made from tree limbs.

The artists and public mingled during a reception on Saturday, July 22. Over 50 people enjoyed the wonderful treats provided by MIWA and Sandee Larsen, who personally organized it.

Special thanks to Nancy Corona for suggesting the exhibit and for helping so much by doing press releases and accepting the art when it was brought in by the artists.

The artists appreciate the opportunity to display and sell our art, and we were very pleased with the quality of the work. We are planning to do this again next summer. Look for us then.

**Mary Ann Theis, Volunteer and Owner of Nine Main Street Gallery in Downtown Titusville**

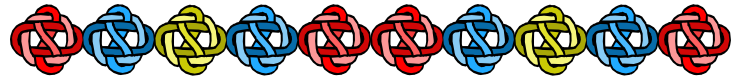


*Gifts in remembrance were donated by...*

*...Betty Camp in memory of her  
dear friend Stanley Hepburn*

*...Forrest & Ruth McCartney in memory of  
Maj. Gen. Don Henderson*

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



Do you have an idea for the *Habi-Chat*? You can submit articles and pictures for consideration to:

**HabiChat@MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org**

## Merritt Island Wildlife Association

*Supporting the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge*  
Joining is simple. Just fill out this form and mail it to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association at P.O. Box 6504, Titusville, FL 32782 or join online at [www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org](http://www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:

☐ **Seniors and Students** – \$10

☐ **Individual** – \$15

☐ **Senior Couples** – \$15

☐ **Family Membership** – \$20

☐ **Supporting Membership** – \$50

☐ **Senior Couple Supporting** – \$75

☐ **Life Membership** – \$250

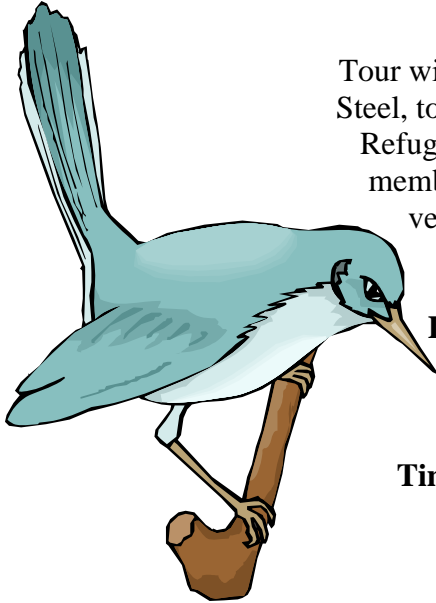
☐ **Patron** – \$1000

☐ **Optional** – Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to MIWA. For credit card payments please call the MIWA office at **321-861-2377**.

## Members-Only Beginning Birding Tours

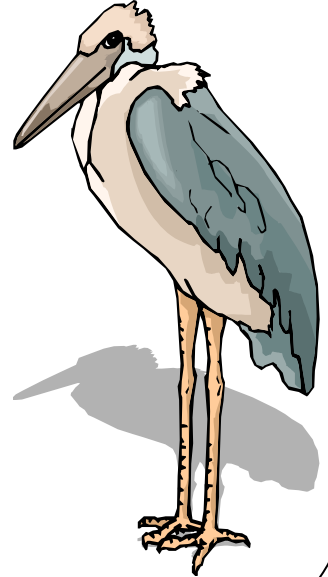


Tour with MIWA board members, Jim Pedersen & Ned Steel, to identify the many native species of birds on the Refuge. Transportation is provided for the first nine members, all others follow safari style via personal vehicles. Voluntary carpooling is suggested.

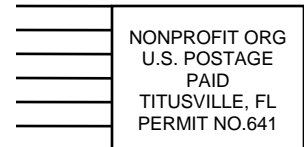
**Dates:** Wednesdays, November 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>  
December 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>

**Time:** 9:00 am (tour typically lasts 2-3 hours)

**Space is limited!**  
**Please RSVP to the MIWA office @ 321-861-2377.**  
**All tours meet at the Refuge VIC.**



Merritt Island Wildlife Association  
P.O. Box 6504  
Titusville, FL 32782  
[www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org](http://www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org)



Beginning in November,  
the VIC will be open  
seven days a week,  
excluding holidays!

