



Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 14, Number 4

Winter 2008

Archeologist Dig Into the Past

The Elliott Plantation (circa 1767) located north of Haulover Canal was the southernmost settlement in Florida during the British Period. The Turnbull Colony located near New Smyrna has been well documented, but little was known of this plantation until letters were discovered in England documenting the accounts of John Ross, the overseer, to carve out a settlement in Florida prior to the American Revolution. The letters lead local historians to connect several historical sites on the refuge with the features described in the letters. This in turn, sparked interest to learn more about this plantation and funding was secured to launch a month-long Archeological investigation.

A four-member team from the Southeastern Archeological Center (SEAC) and a half dozen local volunteers spent most of the month of August and part of September fighting summer heat, hordes of biting insects, and Tropical Storm Fay, investigating sites thought to be part of this British-era plantation. Letters and maps uncovered in England described a plantation complex covering 2500 acres and included the overseer's home, slave quarters, fields, roads, canals, a sugar factory, and a rum distillery. Most of the sites had been documented previously, but it was unclear if these features were linked to the British Period or from a later period in the early 1800's.



Dorn & SEAC Members dig for relics

In order to tie these widely scattered ruins to this 17th century plantation, evidence was needed and the goal of the Archeological investigation was to collect enough physical evidence to date the plantation. For 21 days, archeologists probed, dug, documented, and collected artifacts. Numerous artifacts were found, including broken pottery, hand-forged nails, rough forged metal hardware, charcoal fragments, stone foundations, brick, and stone hearths. The artifacts will require further analysis, but preliminary analysis suggests the artifacts are from the British Period (1766-1788). If their analysis proves this thesis, SEAC will submit the necessary paperwork to nominate the Elliott Plantation to the Federal Register of Historic Places and another chapter of history will be written on the lands of the refuge.

Dorn Whitmore, Operation Specialist



More New Research: Waterfowl Habitat Use Patterns

You may have already seen two new friendly faces on the Refuge. Jessica Piispanen and Elizabeth Hunter are two wildlife technicians hired with the financial support of MIWA. Jessica's and Elizabeth's jobs are to help answer "where have the ducks gone?"

As you all know, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge's primary purpose is designated "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." More specifically, MINWR's wetlands rank highest in Florida regarding numbers of migrating waterfowl counted during the official U.S. Midwinter Waterfowl Inventory. Within the Atlantic Flyway (the entire east coast of the U.S.), no other site winters such large numbers of Lesser Scaup - a waterfowl species declining dramatically in recent years in North America to all-time low levels. The refuge is an area of national importance, harboring up to 62% of all Atlantic Flyway wintering scaup, and 15% of the continental population. However, Lesser Scaup populations wintering at MINWR have dramatically declined in recent years.

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MINWR is also an important area for Atlantic Flyway Northern Pintails. Historically and currently, MINWR has ranked second in wintering pintail populations along the Atlantic Coast. Again, however, Northern Pintail populations have steadily declined on the refuge over the past decades from a mid-winter count of about 20,000 in 1978, to 8,315 birds in 1989, to 3,141 in 1999, and to a low of 1,376 birds in January 2003: a 93% decline from 1978. Northern Pintail populations are a major management concern because their populations throughout North America also have declined to record low levels.

Refuge staff has recently noticed a change in the pattern of waterfowl habitat use on the refuge. As one part of our efforts to learn why waterfowl use patterns are changing on the refuge, a collaboration of Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA), Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR), North Carolina State University Cooperative Research Unit, and Dynamac Corp. has initiated a research project to look at waterfowl use of MINWR's wetland resources. With the financial help of MIWA, the scientific support from Dynamac and NCCRU, and the technical support from the refuge staff we hope to answer our habitat use questions, provide better habitat for waterfowl through active management, and ultimately increase the numbers of birds on the refuge to previous levels.

Mike Legare, Wildlife Biologist, Merritt Island NWR



**Wildlife Technicians Jessica Piispanen
and Elizabeth Hunter**
Photo by Mike Legare



*The Merritt Island Wildlife Association
promotes conservation, awareness,
appreciation and use of the MINWR and
supports Refuge programs.*

President	Jim Pedersen
Vice President	Lee Solid
Treasurer	Jim Butts
Secretary	Joel Reynolds
President Emeritus	George English

Board Members

Sam Beddingfield, Warren Camp, James Clark, Dan Click,
Chris Fairey, Bud Ferguson, Darleen Hunt, Robert Hutchison,
Dan LeBlanc, Forrest McCartney, Joel Reynolds, Truman
Scarborough Ned Steel, John Tarr, Laurilee Thompson, 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 Vacant

Technical Consultant Cheri Ehrhardt-Topper

Habi-Chat **Committee** Sandee Larsen, Dorn Whitmore
and Cheri Ehrhardt-Topper

Official Photographer Joel Reynolds

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Dan LeBlanc leads the meeting
Photo by Tom Dunkerton

Record Number of Members Attend MIWA's Annual Meeting

Every day we read in newspapers about lower attendance at events due to the economy and gas prices. Not so for MIWA's annual meeting! Over 160 members and Refuge staff showed up to show their support at the Debus Center on October 1st. The evening was a busy one, with Board Member elections, Refuge Updates, a delicious dinner, a silent auction and a program on gopher tortoises.

Nomination Chair, George English announced the names of the current board members whose terms are expiring this year. They are: Sam Beddingfield, Jim Butts, Darleen Hunt, Robert Hutchison, Lee Solid, Ned Steel, and Laurilee Thompson. All have agreed to serve an additional term. Captain John Tarr, Dr. James Clark and Truman Scarborough were nominated to serve as new board members. A vote was taken and all board members were approved. MIWA Officers were elected at the November Board of Director's meeting. They Are:

President	Jim Pedersen
Vice President	Lee Solid
Treasurer	Jim Butts
Secretary	Joel Reynolds

MIWA President, Dan LeBlanc, gave an update of MIWA for the past year highlighting MIWA programs and Refuge support. He reported \$125,251.11 is earmarked for 2009 and discussed each obligation. Dan discussed that there were now 1,060 MIWA members, the largest membership of all the National Refuge Friend's Groups. He also announced this year's Bookery sales of \$161,000.

MINWR Manager, Ron Hight, talked about Refuge recent improvements including the Bunkhouse, located here at the Refuge, replacing the abandoned BIO LAB Building and will be used to house various work groups, research groups and visiting firefighters. He recognized his staff and welcomed new staff members: Kim Bennett, Linda Holien, and Joe Sharbaugh. Ron thanked Dan LeBlanc for his outstanding leadership and MIWA board and members for their ongoing support. Ron overviewed ongoing work on the Refuge that included road repairs due to tropical storm Fay and controlled burns to enhanced scrub habitat.

Refuge Operations Specialists Dorn Whitmore, provided a historic program on the British Period settlement at the end of King's Road on the Refuge. This project's main funding is provided by the Canaveral National Seashore with a small fund being provided MIWA for site supplies. Work occurred during August and September 2008 by the Southeast Archeological Center to determine if the Elliot Plantation site (Ross Hammock) was from the British Period.

Ray Ashton, the president of Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute, Inc. which sits on 200 acres west of Gainesville Florida was our keynote speaker. He has established the Finca de la Tortuga-Ashton Biological Preserve – (a 100 acre study of the gopher tortoise in upland habitat). He also founded the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTCD). Ray provided a program on the endangered gopher tortoise and the Community Tortoise

Program encouraging citizens to become active in protecting tortoises in their communities. His publication: The Gopher Tortoise: A Life History was available for sale, with Ray autographing copies for members. Everyone enjoyed a great dinner and bid on silent auction items (raising over \$4000) thus concluding a very successful evening. Thank you to volunteers Mel & Dot Fringer, Darleen Hunt, and Margo Sloan for helping with the event. A big **"thank you"** to Dan LeBlanc for hosting the event and to Tiffany Fairley for helping me coordinate the evening. I could not do it without you. See you at the event next year!

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Manager



Members bid on items at the silent auction.
Photo by Tom Dunkerton



Silent Auction Winners and Donators:

Terry Ark	Six hour fishing trip donated by Jeremy Whaley
Bob Armbruster	Custom Flies and Box Set donated by Jeremy Whaley
Jim Butts	Two Passes donated by Historic Bok Sanctuary
Warren Camp	1/2 day fishing trip donated by Fishing Frenzy Charter Service
	Full Day Back Country Fishing Trip donated by Back Country On Fly
	# Fred Rothenbush Print donated by Roy Roberts III
Jim Clark	Shadow Box donated by Roy Roberts
Dan Click	Framed/matted wildlife print donated by Mel & Dot Fringer
Kay Cooper	Purse donated by Thrifty Treads
Nancy Corona	Framed/matted wildlife print donated by Mel & Dot Fringer
Betty Eichhorn	Butterfly Guide donated by Betty Salter
	One yr. Family Membership donated by Harry P Leu Gardens
Nancy English	Santa Candle Set donated by Cassie Veltman
Chris Fairey	Jewelry donated by Grass Shack Trading Company
	Jewelry donated by Grass Shack Trading Company
Kim Fernandez	Beige Carved jar donated by Dan Whitmer
David Finch	Framed Photography donated by Melody Hendrix
	Sushi Set donated by Trudy Metzger
Mel Fringer	Coral Horse Jar donated by Dan Whitmer
	\$25 gift Card donated by Walmart/Titusville #649
	\$25 gift Card donated by Walmart/Titusville #649
Katie Glenn	Free Airboat Tour for 1 donated by Loxahatchee Everglades Tours
	Free Airboat Tour for 1 donated by Loxahatchee Everglades Tours
	2 for 1 Eco Tour donated by Bill Martin
Neta Harris	Home made Jelly set donated by Trudy Metzger
	Gift Bag donated by Dixie Crossroads Restaurant
Jerri Hight	Wee wood stork Framed watercolor donated by Mary Ann Theis
Barbara Hoelscher	Ecuadorian Wall Hanging donated by Mel & Dot Fringer
	Home made Jelly set donated by Trudy Metzger
Stan Howarter	Family Pass to Old FL Museum donated by Tour St Augustine
Darleen Hunt	African carved Masks donated by Dan Whitmer
Jerry Hunt	Autographed Fishing Shirt donated by Jeremy Whaley
Julie Jones	Customer Flies and Box Set donated by Jeremy Whaley
Helga Lamb	Ladies Shirt donated by The Fly Fisherman
Vince Lamb	Festival registration & social donated by Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival
Sandee Larsen	Scarf donated by Miss Ruth McCartney
Ed Larsen	One night stay donated by Residence Inn by Marriott
	Two night stay donated by Resort at Cocoa Beach
	Two night stay @ luxury condo donated by Hampton Inn
	\$100 upholstery labor donated by Susan Waldron
Dan LeBlanc	Onyx Chessboard w/chess pieces donated by Mel & Dot Fringer
	Framed/matted wildlife print donated by Mel & Dot Fringer



Silent Auction Winners and Donators Continued:

Dan LeBlanc

Marion Linney

Wayne Linney

Ralph Lloyd

Emma Jean McKinley

Linda McLaughlin

Marian Meguair

John Milani

Bob Mullen

Cameron Myers

Lisa Myers

Maggie Nickols

Bill Nunn

Marie Ramer

Margo Sloan

Sandy Snowe

Joyce Stefancic

Barb Stewart

Chas Stewart

Mary Ann Theis

Laurilee Thompson

Jim Trammel

Susan Waldron

Pauline Ward

Rita Wise

Barbara Wood

Susan Wooldridge

Opti Mate Field Bag donated by **Luba Kreidler**

Johnny the Mouse Book donated by **Author, Gale Nolen**

Framed Photography donated by **Meldoy Hendrix**

Matted Photo donated by **Tom Dunkerton**

Two night stay donated by **Courtyard By Marriott/Cocoa Beach**

Crystal Earrings & Necklace set donated by **Marian Meguair**

Butterfly Print donated by **Julie Jones**

Gold Velvet Placemats donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**

Scarf donated by **Miss Ruth McCartney**

Gift Bag donated by **Dixie Crossroads Restaurant**

Hand painted palm frond "spoonbill" donated by **Palm Tree Art**

Men's shirt donated by **The Fly Fisherman**

Cardinal bird house donated by **Sandy Walters**

Pennant signed by Chris Liwiwinski donated by **Miami Dolphins**

\$25 gift Card donated by **Walmart/Titusville #649**

Artistic Rain Barrel donated by **Stefancic Joyce**

Custom Fly Fishing Rod donated by **Delmer Southall**

Custom Flies and Box Set donated by **Jeremy Whaley**

Jewelry donated by **Grass Shack Trading Company**

Framed Photography donated by **Al McKinley**

2 Single Day Passes donated by **Sea World Adventure Park**

Birding journal donated by **Susan Waldron**

Two passes donated by **Butterfly World**

Tickets donated by **Bok Tower Gardens**

Festival registration & Social donated by **Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival**

Travel Kit donated by **Trudy Metzger**

Matted Photo donated by **Tom Dunkerton**

Bat house donated by **Jerri & Darleen Hunt**

1/2 day charter trip for two donated by **Captain Mark Wright**

2 Single Day Passes donated by **Sea World Adventure Park**

A natural art basket donated by **Jerri & Darleen Hunt**

Bird House set donated by **Sandy Walters**

Rwanda Basket donated by **Luba Kriedler**

Original mermaid sculpture donated by **Kim Wendt**

Lighthouse Collectible donated by **St. Augustine Lighthouse**

Admission for 4 donated by **St. Augustine Alligator Farm**

Squirrel Feeder donated by **Forrest McCartney**

Framed/matted wildlife print donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**

Framed/matted wildlife print donated by **Mel & Dot Fringer**

Photography donated by **Dale Nichols**

Free Airboat Tour for 1 donated by **Loxahatchee Everglades Tours**

Great Blue Heron Framed Print donated by **Mary Ann Theis**

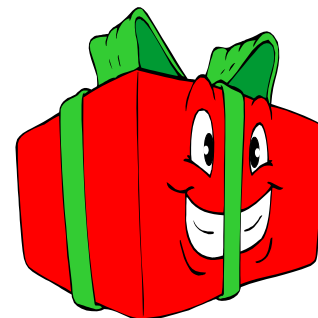
4 tickets to Potters wax Museum donated by **Tour St. Augustine**

Butterfly Guide donated by **Betty Salter**

Tumbler donated by **Ocean Kayak**

Deer Wind chime donated by **Jim Butts**

Memories of Merritt Island donated by **Gale Nolen**





MIWA President, Jim Pedersen
Photo by Carol Pedersen

Message from the President

During our Annual meeting in October, I was appointed as the new MIWA President. I would just like to say that I'm looking forward to serving you and to the exciting and challenging job ahead. I have been a MIWA Board member for about 10 years and for the past 5 years have served as Treasurer. I'm fortunate to serve as president at a good point in MIWA's history. Membership and revenue are both at record levels and numerous Refuge projects are currently in progress. MIWA has enjoyed much success as the result of the dynamic leadership provided by our past President, Dan LeBlanc.

During his 4 year tenure, Dan guided MIWA to achieve many new heights. Under his leadership, Dan initiated a membership drive and MIWA's membership grew to 1,200 and today is recognized as the largest Friend's group in the Refuge System! Our membership has surpassed many very well established Friends groups which have been around longer than MIWA. Today, thanks to Dan, MIWA is now larger than Bosque del Apache, Minnesota Valley, Ding Darling and San Francisco Bay. Wow!

As many of you know, Dan's day job was running the KSC's Visitor Complex for Delaware North Parks and Service and when elected, brought to MIWA a corporate mindset. And it worked! Dan developed a promotional brochure for the Refuge which was distributed to Florida's Welcome Centers, rest areas, and local motels. As a result our visitation improved along with our annual income. Dan's energy was infectious. He challenged our Board members to become more active and encouraged us to engage in a project or committee, which we did with enthusiasm. These accomplishments are a testament to his leadership and managerial skills. I know you join me in applauding Dan for a job very well done.

I have big shoes to fill and my challenge is to continue the success that Dan began. I hope to continue to grow MIWA so we can support new programs and projects for our visitors. I hope to keep MIWA as the #1 Friends Group the nation, and with your support, I know we can do this. I look forward to serving as your new President.

Jim Pedersen, MIWA President



Hello to.....

.....**Gregg Bailey** from N.H.

Gregg will be working with the Public Use Department until May as a Seasonal Refuge Ranger. Gregg has a B.S. in Earth Sciences from Salem State College in MA. He has plenty of experience, working at ten National Park Units that include: Mammoth Cave NP, Denali NP, and Everglades NP. Gregg enjoys cooking, reading and swimming and is looking forward to a winter without snow. Welcome Gregg!

.... **Kim Wendt** from Titusville, FL.

Kim will be working in the Bookery 3 to 5 days a week as a sales associate. Kim loves to write and is a skilled artist, making original sculptures.

Goodbye to.....

.... **Bobbi Lasher** of Cocoa, FL.

Bobbi worked part time in the Bookery for eight years and was a big help with processing membership and stocking retail. Thanks for your hard work and we wish you a happy, healthy retirement.

.... **Brad Sloan** of Titusville, FL.

Brad worked part time in the Bookery for three years and was a big help with the MIWA website and Habi-Chat newsletter. Brad has finished his education and is working as a data entry clerk at the Oaks Medical Center. We wish the best and miss your Habi-Chat skills!

.... **Kathy Whaley** of Titusville, FL

Kathy started her career with the USFWS here at MINWR in the early ninety's as a Refuge Ranger. She returned here for a two year tenure as a Special Assistant. While she worked here she carried the Administrative Department; tracking budgets, revamping the website, supervising the Law Enforcement Department and providing info on everything you can imagine.

Kathy is now a Refuge Manager at Hagerman NWR in East Texas. Thank you, Kathy, for all your hard work here at MINWR. You will surely be missed!





MIWA Accomplishments 2007-2008

Refuge Support/Funding:

- Carpeting and Painting of the VIC (\$3,000)
- GIS Printer (\$1,800)
- VIC Projector (\$2,500)
- GSA Vehicle Lease (\$5,000)
- VIC Gator Float (\$850)
- Volunteer Cell Phones (\$1,000)
- Environmental Educator & Refuge Intern (\$5,000)
- Refuge Volunteer Fund (\$5,000)
- Refuge General Fund (\$8,000)
- Work Camper & Program (\$5,000)
- VIC Touch Screen Computer Repair (\$300)
- Nature Wise Video Production (\$5,000)
- VIC Printer (\$1,600)

MIWA Projects & Events:

- MIWA Members 2007 Annual Meeting Program: Refuge Biologist, Mike Legare; "Wildlife of the Refuge"
- Brevard Watercolor Society 2007 Art Reception and Exhibit
- Fly Fishing Seminar At SEO
- Christmas Bird Count
- Two Refuge Clean Up & Hot Dog Roasts
- VIC Park Bench Project
- "Birds of a Feather" Art Reception/Exhibition

Bookery Highlights:

- Annual Sales of over \$161,000
- Acquired autographed publications by Authors: Bill Thompson III, Jeffery A. Gordon, Victor Emanuel, Louise Zemaitis, Arthur Morris, Frances Keiser & Editor Lisa White
- Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival Booth Sales/Book Signings (over \$4,400 in sales)

Donated to Others:

- \$160 to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida
- \$500 to the National Wildlife Refuge Association
- Door Prizes for the Boy Scouts of America Cub Scout Anniversary Week Blue & Gold Banquet
- Three Silent Auction Items to the Enchanted Forest for the Annual Earth Day Celebration

Acquired:

- Silent Auction Items for 2007 Fund Raiser (raising over \$4,000)
- Bird Feeders & Seed Donations from Titusville Walmart (+500lbs)
- Bottled Water & Gift Card for Refuge Clean Ups from ACE, Publix and Walmart
- Wheel Chair for VIC via Parrish Medical Center

Member's Only Field Trips:

- Three Beginning Bird Watching Tours
- Scrub Jay Tour
- Two Eagle Watch Tours
- Shiloh Marsh Tour
- Bio Lab Road Tour
- Alligator Presentation & Tour
- Manatee Presentation & Tour
- Three Sea turtle Walks

Other MIWA Projects:

- Habi-Chat Quarterly Newsletter & Website



MIWA Minute



I am happy to report that the Bookery has been doing well the past few months. Sales are down slightly, but the cash register is still ringing. Thank you to our members who purchased gifts for their loved ones during the holiday season. All proceeds from sales go directly into Refuge projects. Again Thanks!

MIWA is happy to announce our newest Sr. Couple Life Members **Jean & Ron Weed** of Atlanta, GA, and **Bill & Ann Kellermeyer** of Flintstone, MO and new Life Member, **Dan Click** of Merritt Island. Jean & Ron have visited annually for a few years and Bill & Ann have been regulars at the Refuge for over 10 years. Dan is on our Board of Directors and has been active with the Christmas Bird Count for quite a few years. Thanks for your support!

A Big "THANK YOU" to birder extraordinaire, **Andy Bankert** for yet again donating funds raised at his annual World Series of Birding Competition. Andy is a busy college student now, but still finds time to help the Refuge. Funds of approx. \$400 were pledged by fellow birders, ear marked for MIWA. Andy, you are an example of what a one person can do using his skills to help wildlife.

Another Big "Thank You" goes to Refuge Volunteer & spouse, **Rosemary & Andy Georganna**. Rosemary volunteers at the Refuge VIC desk and is a wealth of information. The couple generously donated \$500 to MIWA this December. What a great Christmas gift!

Speaking of great gifts, the **Environmental Committee of the Brevard Democratic Executive Committee** sponsored a photographic exhibition at Dixie Crossroads in July. Proceeds from the event were donated to the Refuge & UCF. A total of \$500 was donated to MIWA by this caring group of citizens. Thank you, Thank you!

And I can't forget to say thank you to the **Merritt Island Walmart** for donating \$200 to MIWA. Walmart has been supplying wild bird seed for environmental projects and is very committed to keeping these programs going. Thanks.

And last, but not least, thank you to **Impact Photo Graphics**. Impact is one of our many retail vendors and sent MIWA 247 mugs to sell in the Bookery. The retail value of this donation is over \$1,500! So, come on in and buy a mug for yourself or a friend. You'll be helping raise funds and get a beautiful mug for your morning java.

For information on volunteering at the Refuge, contact Nancy Corona at 321-861-0668. Feel free to call MIWA's direct line, 321-861-2377 if you need membership or retail information.

I'll see you at the Refuge!

Sandee Larsen, Bookery Mgr.



Refuge Bird Count Highest in Refuge System

We had another Super Christmas Bird Count this year on the Refuge. On a nice, warm 60 degree morning on December 15th, 40 + dedicated field observers from all around the USA gathered at 5:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center for last minute instructions and are assignments (and some donuts and coffee).

The annual Audubon Society Christmas Counts have been going on in our country for 109 years. Data collected on these counts provides valuable long-term information on species numbers, distribution and trends.

We all gathered back at the Visitor Center at 6 PM to tally our observations. Tired, muddy and bug-bitten, we all agreed that it had been another wonderful day on the Refuge.

Some highlights of this year's count:

- Total Species Observed: **175!** (last year we had 162)
- This will be the highest count for any Wildlife Refuge in the USA
- Some of the Unusual Species: Two Jaeger species (usually none), Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Wilson's Warbler, Broad-winged Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Finch, White-winged Dove, Ross's and Snow Geese and more!

Thanks go to Dorn Whitmore, the Refuge staff and all of our super field observers for a great Christmas Bird Count.

If you would like to participate in next-year's count (it really is fun), contact Jim or Ned.

Jim Pedersen and Ned Steel, CBC Compliers and MIWA Board Members



Ned Steel and Jim Pedersen

Refuge Fall Happenings

Volunteer Fall Social

Resident and returning volunteers got reacquainted, while getting the low down on Refuge projects at the Fall Volunteer Social at Dixie Cross Roads Restaurant. Over 80 volunteers and Refuge staff enjoyed a sea food buffet while viewing a revolving power point presentation comprised of beautiful Refuge images photographed by Refuge volunteers. Refuge Operation Specialist, Dorn Whitmore, presented on a newly investigated Refuge historic site, The Elliott Plantation, Senior Refuge Biologist, Mike Legare, got the audience up to speed on current and upcoming biological projects and Public Use Ranger Nancy Corona highlighted public use programming. Several other Refuge staff mingled with volunteers and answered questions about Refuge projects.

A big thank you goes out to MIWA for sponsoring the event and supporting our very special Refuge Volunteers.

National Public Lands Day

Mulching, trimming and weeding were the name of the game. Fifteen volunteers rolled up their sleeves in support of National Public Lands. National Public Lands Day, celebrated each September, encourages public awareness and support for Federal public lands. Students of Astronaut High School's Environmental Club joined the group to clear the flower beds at Black Point Wildlife Drive's rest stop. Several hours later, a large pile of weeds and beautifully mulched flower beds were a sight for sore eyes. Thank you to the volunteers for their hard work and to MIWA for providing refreshments for this dedicated crew.

International Beach Clean Up

Annually, this world wide cleanup occurs on the third Saturday of September.

For several years, the Refuge in partnership with Keep Brevard Beautiful, has hosted a cleanup at Haulover Canal. This fall, a cadre of more than 100 volunteers comprised of local citizens, Astronaut and Titusville High School Students, Titusville Sunrise Rotary Club members, long-time Refuge Volunteers, and a bus load of Sea World Employees scoured the Haulover Canal shoreline and Bair's Cove boat ramp, leaving the Refuge sparkling clean. MIWA provided the snacks and a hot dog roast for this hard working group. Mark your calendar for next year's International Beach Cleanup at Haulover Canal to support this international event.

Nancy Corona, Public Use Ranger



Volunteer s help during Public Lands Day
Photo by Tom Dunkerton

Wildlife Watercolor Exhibit Opens with Reception Visitor Center

An opening reception was held at the Refuge Visitor Center featuring the 6th Annual Brevard Watercolor Exhibit "Watercolors of Wild Things." Thirty five works were selected for the show. The Sunday afternoon event was attended by over 100 guests who enjoyed refreshments and beverages provided by MIWA. Volunteers, JoAnn Heenan and Betty Salter poured the wine and Laura Covell-Clark of the Indian River Flute Circle entertained guests with her music under the covered deck overlooking the pond. Dorn Whitmore gave welcome remarks and thanked the artists for the outstanding exhibition of artwork.



Beneath best of show painting "Rosy Afternoon" are Darleen Hunt, Show Coordinator, Therese Ferguson, Best of Show Artist, and Lolly Walton. BWS President
Photo by Mr. Ferguson

Award winners of the juried exhibit are: Best of show "Rosy Afternoon" by Therese Ferguson, Best of Flora "New Morning" by Kaye Shannon, 2nd Place "Hunter's Nest" by Witha Lacuesta, 3rd Place "The Waiting Bird" by Connie Marshall, the Refuge Award "Great Horned Owl" by Jeannette Drake, Merit Awards are "Gopher Home" by Christianne Kopp, "Wings to Fly" by Susan Kessler, "Back of the Palm" by Julia George, "Young Plover" by Cindy McKee, and "Big Blue" by Anne Stelzer.

As of this writing one original painting and 15 prints have been sold. Artists donate a portion of the proceeds to MIWA. You are invited to view this wonderful art exhibition inspired by the MINWR from now through January 30.

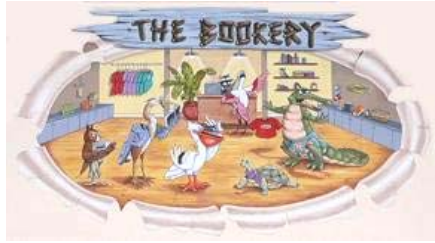
Darleen Hunt, MIWA Board Member



Laura Covell-Clark plays beautiful flute music at the event.
Photo by Sandee Larsen

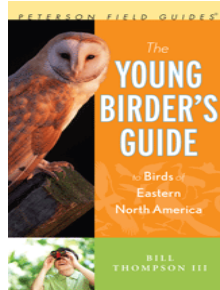


New Items in



*Petersen's Field Guide:
The Young Birder's Guide*
By Bill Thompson III

Published by Houghton Mifflin....\$14.95
A guide of 200 of the most common and interesting birds in eastern NA, written especially for kids ages 8 & up.



Those Amazing Alligators
By Kathy Feeney

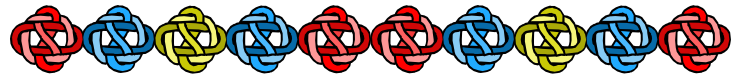
Published by Pineapple Press....\$8.95
This book answers 20 questions to help you understand alligators and their behavior.



The Young Naturalist's Guide to Florida Second Edition
Published by Pineapple Press...\$18.95
A must have for all young nature lover's. Contains chapters on weather, unusual Plants and animals found only in Florida.

**For retail information, call the
MIWA Office at 321-861-2377**

Habi-Chat has email! If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive MIWA announcements, please add us to your safe senders list and send a request to **HabiChat@MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org**



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MIWA, P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781



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 2683, Titusville, FL 32781
or join online at
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
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- ☐ **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.



Visitor Information Center Hours

Monday through Friday
8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday and Sunday*
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.

Free MIWA Members-Only Tours

MIWA Bird Tours

Saturday, January 10th and February 21, 2009.

Meet MIWA's Environmental Educator, Tom Mertins, for a Beginning Bird Tour at 1P.M.

Saturday, Meet at the Refuge Visitor Center to ride in the van through Black Point Wildlife

Drive. The group size is limited to 10 members and lasts from 2-3 hours. See registration

info below. Bring binoculars, field guides, and beverages as you feel necessary. Loaner binoculars are available.



Bald Eagle Presentation and Nest Tour

Saturday, January 31st, 2009

Meet Tom Mertins at the Refuge VIC at 1:00 P.M. for a power point presentation followed by a drive via personal vehicle to view the bald eagles on a nest through spotting scopes.

Space is limited to 25 members. See registration info below.



Florida Scrub-jay Presentation & Tour

Saturday, February 7th, 2009

Join Tom at the Refuge VIC at 1:00 P.M. for a 25-minute presentation on Florida's Scrub-jays. The program will be followed by a hike on the Scrub Ridge Trail to observe these unique birds in their natural habitat. Members will caravan via personal vehicle to the trail. Be prepared to hike one-mile. Hat, sunscreen, binoculars (loaners are also available) water, and comfortable walking shoes are suggested.

For reservations, call Tom Mertins at 321-861-5601 or e mail him at scrubjayflorida@yahoo.com



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Titusville, FL 32781

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