

ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST

Gazetteer



ALACHUA
CONSERVATION
TRUST



SPRING 2020

Growing Up Florida Wild

Photo By Julie Garrett

SPRING 2020 UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

14 – 21st Annual Conservation Stewards Awards

@ Prairie Creek Lodge
5:30pm to 9:30pm

19 – Woman’s Work: Conserving Wild Florida – talk by The Marjorie’s Hannah Brown and Becca Burton

@ Prairie Creek Lodge
6:30pm to 8:00pm

22 – Pancakes on the Prairie

@ Tusawilla Preserve
9am to 11:30am

28 – Volunteer Work Day: Trail Cleanup

@ Fox Pen Preserve
9am to 12pm

29 – CBI Workshop: What’s a Body to Do? Understanding Disposition Options

@ Prairie Creek Lodge
1pm to 3pm

APRIL

4 – Yoga on the Prairie with Victoria Thompson of YogaLoka

@ Tusawilla Cabin
9am to 10am

4 – CBI Workshop: Getting What You Want at End of Life

@ Prairie Creek Lodge
9am to 12pm

5 – Bug Walk With Dr. Jiri Hulcr and Dr. Andrea Lucky

@ Little Orange Creek Preserve
10:30am to 12:30pm

10 – Santa Fe River Paddle

@ Santa Fe Springs
9:30am to 12:30pm

11 – Volunteer Work Day: Trail Cleanup

@ Prairie Creek Preserve
9am to 12pm

11 – Tree Fest

@ Swamp Head Brewery
1pm to 11pm

19 – Edible and Medicinal Plant Walk With Susan Marynowski

@ Prairie Creek Preserve
10am to 12pm

25 – Hogtown Craft Beer Festival

@ the Alachua County Fairgrounds
12pm to 5:15pm

MAY

2 – Yoga on the Prairie with Victoria Thompson of YogaLoka

@ Tusawilla Cabin
9am to 10am

2 – Fox Pen Preserve Grand Opening

@ Fox Pen Preserve
10am to 12:30pm

3 – Volunteer Work Day: Invasive Plant Removal

@ Serenola Forest Preserve
9am to 11am

9 – CBI Community Planting Day

@ PCCC
10am to 12pm

9 – Ice Cream in the Park

@ Rockwood Park
1pm to 3pm

24 – CBI Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

@ Prairie Creek Lodge
4pm to 6pm

JUNE

6 – Yoga on the Prairie with Victoria Thompson of YogaLoka

@ Tusawilla Cabin
9am to 10am

CBI – Conservation Burial, Inc.

PCCC – Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

Event updates at: [AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events](https://www.alachuaconservationtrust.org/upcoming-events)



KATE LEE

Kate Lee has spent as much of her life outdoors as possible. As a child, she went on overnight fishing boat trips to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas, played on the C&O Canal path, and climbed the huge rocky slopes of Great Falls, Maryland. After completing her undergraduate and graduate degrees, Kate worked as a volunteer with the Florida Fish & Game Commission helping inventory the American crocodile population in Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge. An avid supporter of conservation, Kate donated a conservation easement on her land and a remainder interest in her homestead in the Serenola Forest area in 2007.

IAN KRESS

Ian was born in Gainesville in 1970, and grew up here, graduating from Eastside High School and Santa Fe Community College. In the mid-80's, his family moved to the southwest side of town, and as a teenager he spent many an hour exploring the woods there, developing a love of the natural world. In the mid 2000's, Ian began to wonder what the status and fate was of the woods that he walked in as a teen and began working to protect and conserve this beautiful section of native Florida. Thirteen years later, that land is protected conservation land, known now as Serenola Forest Preserve, due in no small part to Ian's personal contributions and persistent advocacy.

WILLA DRUMMOND

Dr. Willa H. Drummond came to Gainesville for a job interview in 1978 and immediately fell in love with the trees and open spaces. She joined the UF Department of Pediatrics and devoted herself to studying Primary Pulmonary Hypertension in newborns. Her seminal research led to the treatment and cure of this once lethal disease. Dr. Drummond has also dedicated herself to protecting the environment as a leader of the Serenola/Idylwild Special Area Study Group and has donated 20 acres of her land to the Serenola Forest Preserve.

ORANGE LAKE OVERLOOK

Forever Florida's Finest Vista

On November 22, 2019, Orange Lake Overlook became a part of Florida's conservation landscape forever. ACT, with support from The Conservation Fund as well as private individuals and organizations from all over the United States, purchased the property for \$1.35 million.

The famous Orange Lake Overlook, or "OLO," can be found just south of McIntosh on U.S. 441, and serves as one of the last historic views of "Old Florida". Beneath its painted skies, incredible fauna and breathtaking views lies a limitless source of inspiration for local artists and a timeless glimpse into the cultural and historic properties of North Florida. The 71-acre parcel of land also serves as a critical wildlife corridor for many of Florida's native and endangered species. Eagle nests pepper the palm trees and sandhill cranes use the hill as a runway every winter. The Timucuan Indians would also use the site as a campground before the area's agricultural boom in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For decades, OLO was part of the vast citrus holdings of O.D. "Buddy" Huff. The Huffs managed their citrus shop for years and would let travelers sample their famous Florida orange juice. Following several hard freezes in the 1980's, the citrus shop and orange groves became but a faint memory.

Though the property has changed over time, OLO still inspires artists and writers all over Florida. Jeff Ripple, a Florida artist famous for his visual art pieces, photography, and published writings, has created both an oil painting and a poem paying tribute to Orange Lake Overlook. According to Gary Borse, a local artist in Fairfield, OLO's "elevated and unobstructed prehistoric view of Orange Lake [make it] one of the most picturesque vistas in the State of Florida." Sean Dowie, another renowned local nature photographer, insists that "OLO," is one of nature's last masterpieces. Orange Lake Overlook "is where friends come to watch the rise and fall of harvest moons, where artists become inspired to create, lovers become brave enough to hold hands and where many come to sit, admire, and seek a few moments of peace from a hectic world."

Alachua Conservation Trust still needs your donations in order to repay the loans on this iconic property, make improvements to the old packing house and citrus shop, and add walking trails and an observation deck prior to opening the property to the public. To learn more about how you can help support Orange Lake Overlook, visit www.AlachuaConservation-Trust.org/orange-lake-overlook.

By Lianne D'Arcy, *Editorial Intern*



Photo By Alison Blakeslee



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Swamp Head Brewery

At Swamp Head Brewery we're focused on preserving Florida's natural treasures. We aim to be a Florida-first company which includes purchasing local whenever possible and only distributing our beer within the state; we do what we can to reduce our carbon footprint. We need the Earth, but the Earth doesn't need us and we do our best to keep that in mind throughout every facet of our company, from sourcing our ingredients and brewing the beer up until we hand a glass over to our consumers.

Giving back is an important goal of ours, and we've partnered with wildlife and environment-focused organizations such as the Coastal Conservation Association, Sea Turtle Conservancy, and Alachua Conservation Trust that share our values of preserving Mother Nature. Whenever we have the opportunity to aid in projects like ACT's longleaf pine restoration initiative in North Florida and its other activities benefiting Florida's natural resources, that's what we are all about.

By Molly Eveleth, *Swamp Head Brewery*



TREE FEST 2020

Help Plant 125K Trees!

Solar Impact, Inc. and Swamp Head Brewery have teamed up again for the 6th Annual Tree Fest at Swamp Head Brewery on Saturday, April 11th from 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. Admission is free.

Tree Fest celebrates the environment by raising money to plant trees with ACT in an event that features food trucks, family-friendly activities, live music, and of course, Swamp Head beer. Started in 2015, Tree Fest has supported planting over 300k one-year-old longleaf pine seedlings in Alachua County. This year, 5 trees will be planted for every beer purchased during the Tree Fest event, 20 trees for every Tree Fest t-shirt bought, and all donations from Tree Fest sponsors will go directly to ACT to plant trees at Little Orange Creek Preserve in Hawthorne, Florida. Join us at Tree Fest 2020 and help us reach our goal of planting an additional **125k trees** this year alone! **Interested in being a 2020 Tree Fest sponsor? Email info@treefestfl.com for details.**

DONATE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Donations can come in many forms. Whether your contribution is \$1, \$1 million, or a working vehicle, all donations make a difference. ACT's important work simply would not happen if it were not for the many supporters who believe in the importance of our mission. No matter what stage you are at in life, there are several donation options available that will allow you to make a lasting impact for land conservation:



Include ACT in Your Long-Term Planning:

You can also give back by incorporating ACT into your estate plan or will. These arrangements allow for a wide range of tax and income incentives and further ACT's land acquisition and restoration efforts tremendously. Donating from your IRA is another option for receiving tax benefits while supporting a good cause.



Property Donations:

ACT also accepts donations of land or other personal property to be utilized for our nonprofit purposes. Personal property items may include vehicles, office equipment, furniture, or artwork.



Peer-To-Peer Fundraising: Peer-to-peer fundraising through online social media posts and crowdfunding pages are also a meaningful way to give back. Not only do these fundraisers provide direct support to ACT, but they also help raise awareness about the organization and our work.



Cash Donations: One of the simplest ways to support ACT's mission is by donating online, by mail, or in person. Consider making a monthly or annually recurring donation - large or small - that provides regular support for ACT's conservation efforts. Some companies also offer an employer match program for employees who designate ACT as the recipient of a recurring donation from their paycheck. With a recurring gift, your contribution can make a significant impact over time.

If you are interested in donating to ACT, contact us at (352) 373-1078 to learn more about available donation options.

By Lianne D'Arcy, *Editorial Intern*



Lisa Jelks and her beloved Matrix

Long-time ACT board member Howard Jelks and his wife, Lisa, recently faced a difficult decision: spend thousands of dollars to fix the transmission on their beloved 17-year old car, or buy a new one. Although they loved their aging Toyota Matrix, they decided to purchase a hybrid vehicle that would get better gas mileage. During an ACT committee meeting, Howard happened to mention the Matrix to an ACT staff member, who immediately realized a mutual solution was available. ACT needed a small, fuel efficient car for meetings, events, and landowner meetings and the Jelks Family wanted the car to find a good home. So, Howard and Lisa had the transmission fixed and donated their car to ACT. This turned out to be a win-win situation for everyone! Which is the point of this story: although cash is always an acceptable and appreciated donation, it is not the only type of donation that can benefit local land conservation!

THE
**AMAZING
GIVE**

April 22-23, 2020

www.TheAmazingGive.org

DO SOMETHING AMAZING IN 2020

Keep Florida Wild

Donate to land acquisition, restoration, and environmental education during the Amazing Give!

Join ACT from April 22nd-23rd for the Amazing Give, a 24-hour on-line fundraising event hosted by the Community Foundation of North Central Florida. The Amazing Give is an opportunity for you to support the important work that local nonprofits are doing in your community, and once again, ACT will be one of the participating charities that you can contribute to during the Amazing Give this year. Whether you make a \$5 donation or a \$5,000 donation, your support will assist ACT in its important land acquisition, restoration, and environmental education efforts across 16 counties in North Central Florida.

The Amazing Give donation pages will go live on April 1st, and thanks to a generous donor, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$10,000! Stay tuned for our emails and social media posts for additional details over the next few weeks about how you can support ACT during the Amazing Give, and in doing so, help keep Florida wild.

HOGTOWN CRAFT BEER FEST

Enjoy A Cold One While Supporting
Local Conservation



Tickets on sale now. A portion of proceeds benefit Alachua Conservation Trust.

Gainesville's Hogtown Brewers will once again be hosting their annual Hogtown Craft Beer Festival on April 25th from 12pm to 5:15pm at the Alachua County Fairgrounds. Sample beers from various local, regional, and national craft breweries and brewpubs while enjoying food from Gainesville area restaurants and caterers, live music, and informative homebrewing demonstrations. Tickets are available on Ticketleap.com for \$45 until March 21st. Ticket prices will increase to \$55 on April 1st. Tickets will not be available at the door, so get yours today!



GRAB A SLICE AT SACHEL'S

All ATM fees in April will support ACT's Creekside Environmental Ed in Alachua & Putnam Counties

From April 1st-30th, if you use the ATM at Satchel's Pizza, all of the fees you pay will support ACT's Creekside Environmental Ed for Kids (CrEEK) Program. The CrEEK Program teaches students from under-served schools in Alachua and Putnam counties about wetland and wildlife ecology through outdoor activities and projects.

This program works to foster a love for nature at a young age by immersing students in the outdoor environment at Little Orange Creek Nature Park and teaching them about the importance of the surrounding natural world. ATM fees from Satchel's will support the CrEEK Program by providing funding for busing and supplies for the more than 1,000 students who participate in the program each year.

We hope you will stop by Satchel's main location in Gainesville and support the CrEEK Program this April!



Photo By Kim Davidson

INAUGURAL SWAMP OTTER 5K AND NATURE DAY

Little Orange Creek Celebrates Local Conservation

On a cool fall morning last November, runners and walkers stepped up to the starting line and became the first to compete in the inaugural Swamp Otter 5K Race. The 3.14-mile trail run challenged participants as they made their way through Little Orange Creek Preserve and Nature Park. Over 40 runners completed the inaugural event, which was followed by a 1-mile fun run for younger participants and their parents. A big thank you to all of the race sponsors and supporters, who made this year's event a huge success!

The fun didn't stop there! Following the race, the park transformed into Nature Day, a half-day event that celebrated the re-opening of Little Orange Creek Nature Park. The event featured local craft vendors and conservation groups, expert-led bird and plant walks, children's

activities, and live performances including a William Bartram living history speaker who entertained the audience with tales of Bartram's 18th century adventures through the Florida wilderness.

Both events were planned by ACT in partnership with the City of Hawthorne and Friends of Little Orange Creek. "We are excited to re-welcome the community to Little Orange Creek Nature Park on this beautiful day," stated Randi Cameon, President of Friends of Little Orange Creek. "We are glad to see so many families and friends came out here today to enjoy the park and learn about conservation efforts in the area."

ACT has already started planning the next Swamp Otter 5K and Nature Day at Little Orange Creek. Stay tuned for a Save the Date for fall 2020!



Photo By Alison Blakeslee

COURSE SPONSORS



Baker duBois Group

START/FINISH LINE SPONSORS



Thank You!

CONNECTING WITH OUR INNER CHILD

ACT's Nature Play Days

Nothing comes close to watching a child experience and connect with their environment. You cannot resist smiling as you watch them approach the natural world with excitement and curiosity. These moments remind you of your first explorations in nature and how they shaped you into the person you are today. For the parents and grandparents who attended ACT's Nature Play Days, that sense of wonder they felt as children came full circle through their own little ones.

This past fall, ACT hosted a new education series at Tuscawilla Cabin in Micanopy for tiny tykes and their families. Designed for ages 0-5, Nature Play Days featured different stations of outdoor activities centered on nature-inspired themes such as water and birds. Activities were hands-on and allowed participants to immerse themselves in the natural environment of ACT's Tuscawilla Preserve.

Toddlers who attended the Play Days were not the only ones to get down in the dirt, as their families also joined in on the fun! For each unit, different activities were set up for everyone to enjoy together, including collecting branches for building a bird nest, experimenting with nature-inspired colors and shapes, testing out various textures like "dirt" and "water", and making bird sounds with blocks and hammers.



As many as twenty children and their families attended Nature Plays Days each week, including several who returned with new friends in tow. Nature Plays Days joins ACT's successful Creekside Environmental Ed for Kids and Young Leaders for Wild Florida programs as part of our community environmental education and outreach efforts for young people.

If you weren't able to attend Nature Plays Days in the fall, we hope you'll come out and participate in these events later this year. Until then, we encourage you to explore the outdoors with your little ones at one of our public preserves, where you can experience nature firsthand and through the eyes of your children - Florida's future generations of land and water stewards.



PROTECTING THE BEAUTY OF NORTHWEST MARION COUNTY

Bruce Proctor and Kathy Paterson

As you coast down the rolling, hilly roads of northwest Marion County, you could pass through the historic community of Shiloh and not even notice it for the beautiful scenery. Tucked deep into the forest and situated between Barr Hammock Preserve and Price's Scrub State Park, is a hidden jewel and a community treasure. Bruce Proctor, the owner of the 10-acre Lost Valley Farm, recognized the unique natural qualities of the property and has worked hard to assure that it will be kept in conservation long after his time on earth. This January, his vision was realized when he finalized the donation of a conservation easement on the property to ACT.

Bruce first moved to Lost Valley Farm nearly thirty years ago. More recently, while battling health challenges, he decided that the best thing for his recovery would be to grow his own organic blackberries. His orchard was an extraordinary success and was more productive than he had ever hoped. So successful was it that he and his partner, Kathy Paterson, were able to open a U-Pick blackberry farm and spread the blackberry love. On the warm summer days of May and June, the orchard is full of visitors carefully plucking the juicy morsels from thorny vines which have been pruned with the utmost care.

Lost Valley Farm has been cultivated with the same care and concern for the wellbeing of the earth and its creatures. As the long, windy driveway opens into the farm's clearing, towering oaks, pines and hickories frame the field of wildflowers and the sloping rows of the blackberry patch.



Tom Kay With Kathy and Bruce

Birds and gopher tortoises peacefully coexist in the garden, which includes hearty crops of organic vegetables, turmeric and roselle hibiscus. Along the southern portion of the property is a patch of mature upland hardwood forest with swamp chestnut oak, southern red oaks, and eastern hophornbeam, which grades off the property into a forested creek that leads to a hidden wetland.

These conscientious land stewards are keenly aware of the ways irresponsible farming practices could affect these vulnerable wetlands and the creatures that rely on them. Their decision to protect the land with a conservation easement is a shining example of their commitment when it comes to protecting the resources that ultimately sustain us all.



Sara Eoff in her historic family home

GIVING GRATITUDE TO CHERISHED LANDS

Sara and Kay Eoff

Deep within Okaloosa County lies a hidden gem. It's a special property, watched over by towering longleaf pines and spotted with white lilies. Tucked away, past the ancient cypress swamp trees and new native flora lies a quaint, old Florida cracker house, rich with history.

Thanks to Sara and Kay Eoff, longtime supporters of ACT, the magic of this property will be preserved forever. In late 2018, the couple placed a Conservation Easement on their land, protecting all 775 acres of it.

The Eoff property near Laurel Hill, has been in the family for multiple generations. Sara's great grandparents acquired the acreage in the 1800's and the family has cherished the land ever since. Sara helped out on the farm as a child and grew up caring for animals. She fondly remembers riding on the back of her favorite milk cow, "Lazy Bones," during her time there.

"We're preserving the community as well as the land," Sara said. "My family has always lived in that area, and

we could see the potential loss of the ecosystem without the easement. We wanted to ensure the protection of our family land."

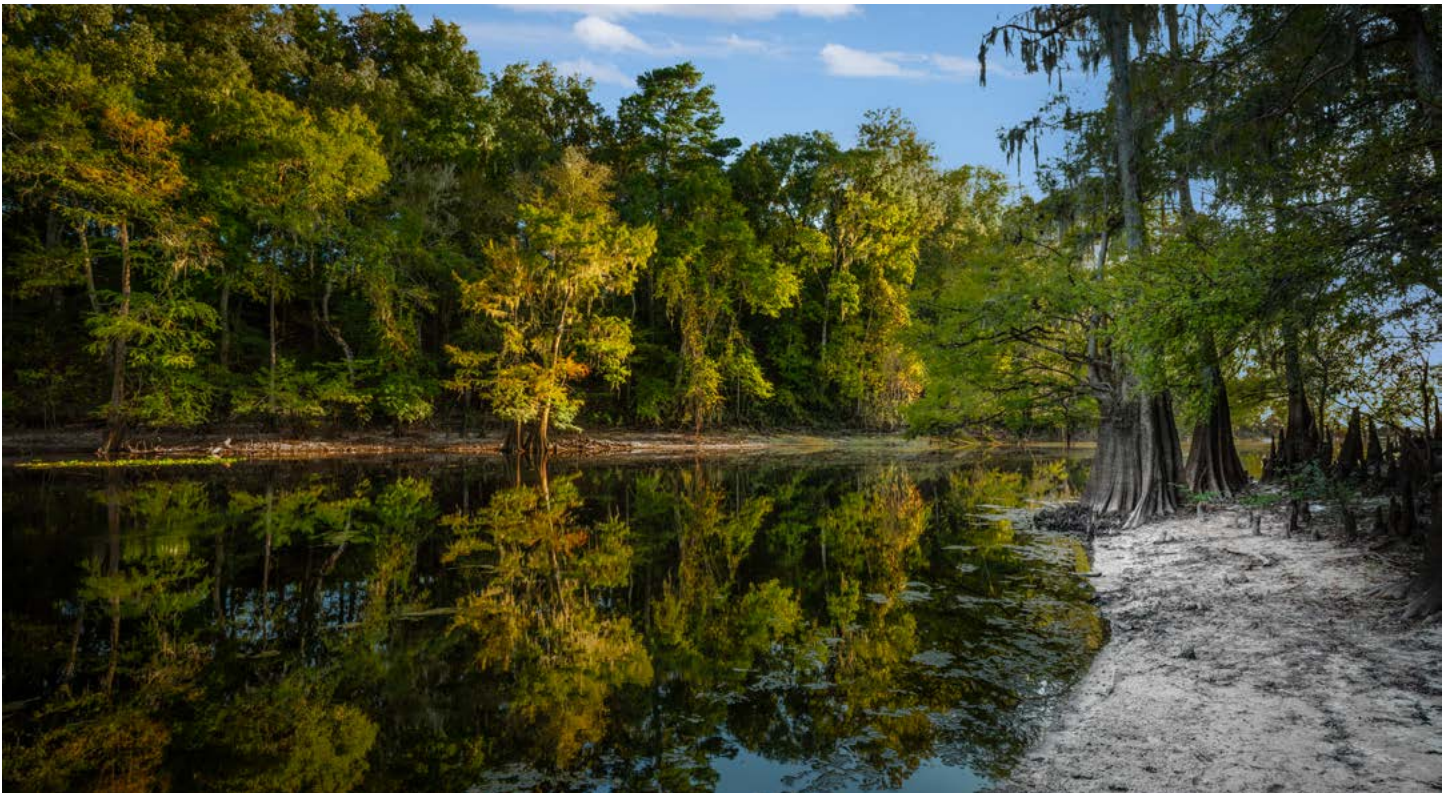
The unique and fragile habitats within the property are closely tied to five unique Florida watersheds. Because of this, the easement ensures the protection of the surface and ground water quality through the aquifer, wetlands, and riparian areas. It also helps to protect some of Florida's threatened and rare species that have made a home for themselves within the property's beautiful, natural spaces.

Sara and Kay have also granted ACT a conservation easement and Life Estate on their property off of Newnans Lake and currently spend their days outdoors, butterfly and bird watching. "I applaud these easements," Sara said. "We're just grateful to help out."

By Lianne D'Arcy, *Editorial Intern*



Kay Eoff and ACT staffer Ivor Kincaide



SPRING INTO ACTION FOR THE SANTA FE

Photo By Kim Davidson

There are over 90 springs in the Santa Fe River Basin-Watershed; all critical and unique pieces in the health of the waterway, its wildlife, and the people who depend upon it. Having a chance to protect just one of these gateways to the Floridan aquifer is a rare opportunity. Protecting two springs through one project is nearly unheard of, but ACT's latest acquisition effort in Columbia County, known as the Santa Fe Springs Project, is providing us with the opportunity to do just that.

Totalling 254 acres, the Santa Fe Springs Project will protect two freshwater springs. The first of these springs is the namesake for the property, the first-magnitude Santa Fe Spring, which sits directly at the confluence of the Santa Fe River and Olustee Creek and is part of a vast cave system that has captured the imagination of many noted cave divers. The second spring is an unnamed fourth-magnitude spring that is secluded high above the river, under the trees, and dances across white sands before trickling down to the riverbank. In addition to protecting the springs, spring runs, and surrounding uplands, the Santa Fe Springs Project will also protect approximately 1.3 miles of river frontage, and the riverbank through the project area itself, which dips and rises along dramatic bluffs that are shaped by the water's ceaseless movement.

Conserving this land has been a priority of the state of Florida and the Suwannee River Water Management District for over 20 years, but with five different property owners and multiple parcels, the complex nature of the project left it sitting and waiting on the river's edge for decades. Since the summer of 2018, ACT has been working to see this project come to fruition, and we are proud to announce that a deal has been struck to conserve Santa Fe Spring and the surrounding land and river! The first two closings occurred in late 2019, the third and fourth in early 2020, with the final closing scheduled for April 2020.

But to fully make this dream a reality, we need your help! To complete protection of the Santa Fe springs, river frontage, and surrounding land, together we need to raise an additional \$175,000.



ACT is working hard to leverage close to \$250,000 already raised by individual donors and by applying matching funds from other sources including The Conservation Alliance, which contributed \$35,000 to the project. ACT is also working with the Suwannee River Water Management District to secure additional funding for the project and has received a \$1 million commitment for the project through a generous private foundation.

Once purchased, ACT will manage the land as a public preserve with a multi-use trail system and observation areas to view the springs. Restoration work will also be undertaken with longleaf pine plantings in the once-sandhill portions of the property to help enhance the habitat value for wildlife that travel through this critical east-west linkage for the state of Florida.

Ensuring the successful completion of this project will contribute to safeguarding drinking water quality in the region and ensure that our community maintains the momentum needed to protect the watershed as a whole. Please join us in the protection of the Santa Fe Springs by donating what you can today to make sure our treasured wild Florida flourishes for generations to come.



To learn more about the Santa Fe Springs Project and how you can help, visit www.AlachuaConservation-Trust.org/santa-fe-springs-project.

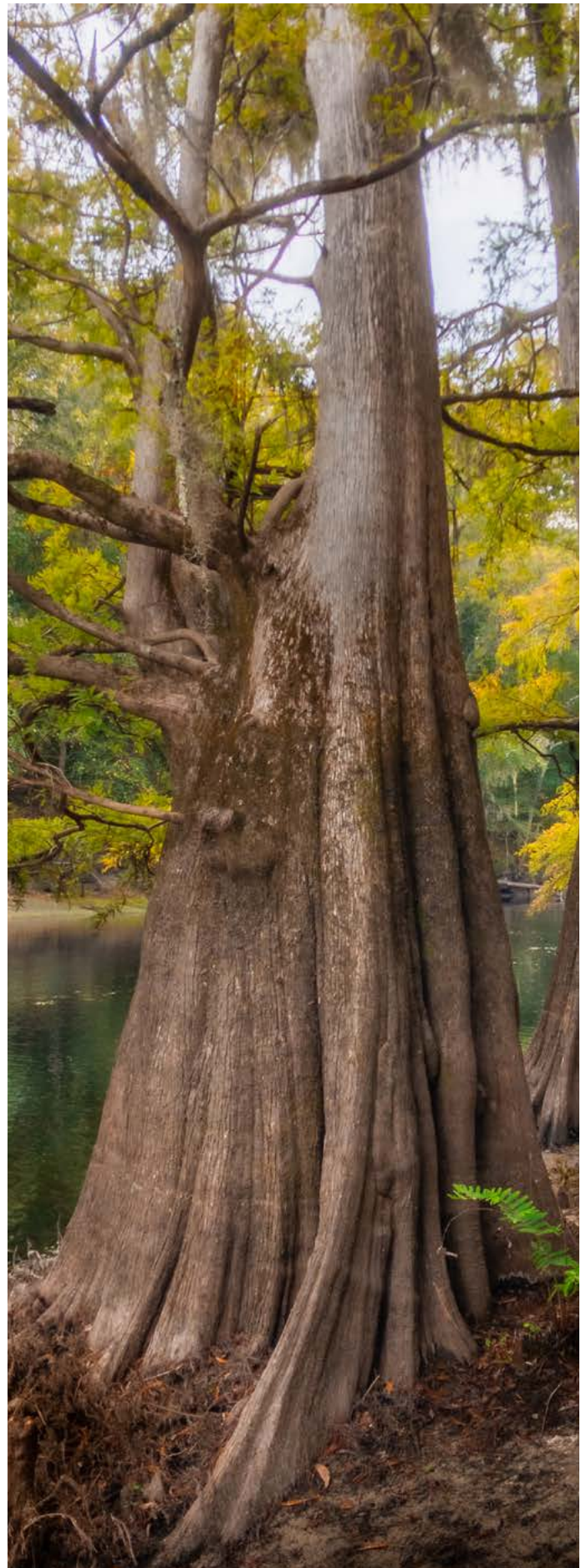


Photo By Alison Blakeslee

PROTECTING LONGLEAF PINE HABITAT

Through Private and Public Partnerships

A familiar Florida backdrop, longleaf pine forests once covered more than 90 million acres across the Southeastern United States. These trees towered above the rare species that once thrived beneath them, blanketing the land with life. Today, less than 5% of these once-dominant forests still exist, all of which are now scattered throughout the South.

But there is hope for these majestic woodlands: ACT is leading a group of regional partners made up of agencies on both the federal and state levels, as well as other local nonprofits, to support longleaf pine restoration in North Central Florida. Nine partners are currently involved in the Ocala Longleaf Implementation Team (OLIT), working together to support active prescribed burn programs, multi-agency collaborations around fire training, and integrated natural resource management of longleaf systems.

“For Alachua Conservation Trust, this is a big opportunity to do what nonprofits can do well - pull together partners in a region and rally to get good work done,” states OLIT Project Coordinator Ivor Kincaide. “Longleaf pine habitat is very much imperiled in North Florida due to lack of protection and development.”

“This is why our organization, as well as our partners, are so interested in finding ways to protect, restore, and

properly manage what remains,” Kincaide notes.

OLIT utilizes prescribed fire, private landowner outreach, and habitat restoration to facilitate longleaf pine habitat restoration on both public and private lands located within and between the Ocala National Forest and Camp Blanding Joint Training Center. This work helps aid the recovery of threatened species such as the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, the imperiled pine snake and gopher tortoise, and over 20 other threatened species that rely on longleaf habitat to survive.

This program would not be possible without the support of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which in 2019 provided OLIT a generous grant of \$300,000. According to Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director and CEO of NFWF, “Longleaf pine forests are one of the world’s most biodiverse and vulnerable ecosystems”.

ACT and the Ocala Longleaf Implementation Team partners are working together diligently to restore a 20,000 acres of former Longleaf pine habitat as we aim to bring Florida’s treasured ecosystems back to their full glory.

By Lianne D’Arcy, *Editorial Intern*



ACT staffer on a prescribed burn



THE GIFT OF HABITAT PRESERVED: DOG ISLAND

Long-time friends, the Ireland and Firman families, reached out to ACT a year ago after learning about ACT's Coastal Conservation Easement Program to see how they could protect their land for nesting sea turtles. Their properties are located on Dog Island off the Gulf Coast in the Florida Panhandle, approximately four miles offshore from Carabelle. Dog Island is the eastern-most barrier island in a chain of islands protecting the St. George Sound in Franklin County. Nearly 60 percent of the 1,840-acre island is already owned by The Nature Conservancy as conservation land.

After talking with ACT, the Ireland and Firman families decided to donate 30 acres of beachfront and dune habitat on Dog Island for conservation. The properties, which were donated to ACT at the end of 2019, have never been developed and will remain undeveloped forever. Coastal swale and trough habitat maintained by offshore wind and waves creates dune habitat colonized by important species like sea oats. These dunes help sand build up, which in turn creates habitat for nesting sea turtles. The island is also important for wintering shorebirds, with over 274 native species recorded.

Due to the vulnerability of coastal habitat by human impact, the property will be maintained as the Pam Firman Preserve for coastal species and sea turtle nesting. The property will be managed and monitored by ACT with the goal of maintaining the habitat as the high-quality natural community that it is. Thank you to the Ireland and Firman families for this meaningful and treasured gift!

TAKING CONSERVATION TO THE COASTS TO PROTECT SEA TURTLES

Did you know that Alachua Conservation Trust is working to protect land in coastal communities around the state? With grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research, ACT is working with beach-front private property owners to protect nesting sea turtle habitat state-wide.

In partnership with the Sea Turtle Conservancy and the University of Florida Levine College of Law Conservation Clinic, ACT has developed various conservation incentives for coastal properties, and these efforts are helping landowners perpetually protect their properties to maintain dune habitat, keep beaches clear of obstructions, and have sea turtle-appropriate lighting. If a property protected by a coastal easement is sold or a local ordinance changes, the property will still remain protected for sea turtles. Through public meetings and outreach across the state, ACT informs landowners and local governments about these opportunities for conservation that offer potential tax benefits. Additionally, ACT has easements that only include sea-turtle friendly lighting. In lieu of easements, we have also created Beach Management Agreements and Plans. These agreements include stewardship activities such as native dune plantings to protect habitat for a set number of years.

If you'd like to protect your beach-front property with a coastal easement or to learn more, please contact Erica Hernandez at act.eric@gmail.com or visit www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/sea-turtle-conservation.

PROTECTING PRIVATE LAND IN THE ICHETUCKNEE TRACE

The rural and beautiful landscape of Columbia County, Florida, is well known by locals and visitors alike for swimming, tubing, and kayaking the iconic Ichetucknee Springs. While many know how important it is to protect our vulnerable springs, what may be less obvious is the need to protect upland areas that could be miles away. This is because much of the aquifer in Columbia County is unconfined, made up of sandy soils and karst features that drain rainfall directly to the Floridan Aquifer which flows out at our springs.

The Ichetucknee Trace is an ancient stream bed with a high concentration of karst features that connects Lake City to the spring head at Ichetucknee Springs State Park. This highly pervious footprint allows for a great vulnerability to the introduction of pollutants and nutrients to the spring.

The Ichetucknee Trace and surrounding recharge areas are part of a rural landscape that is primarily private property with single family homes, cattle operations, agricultural crops and managed pine forest.



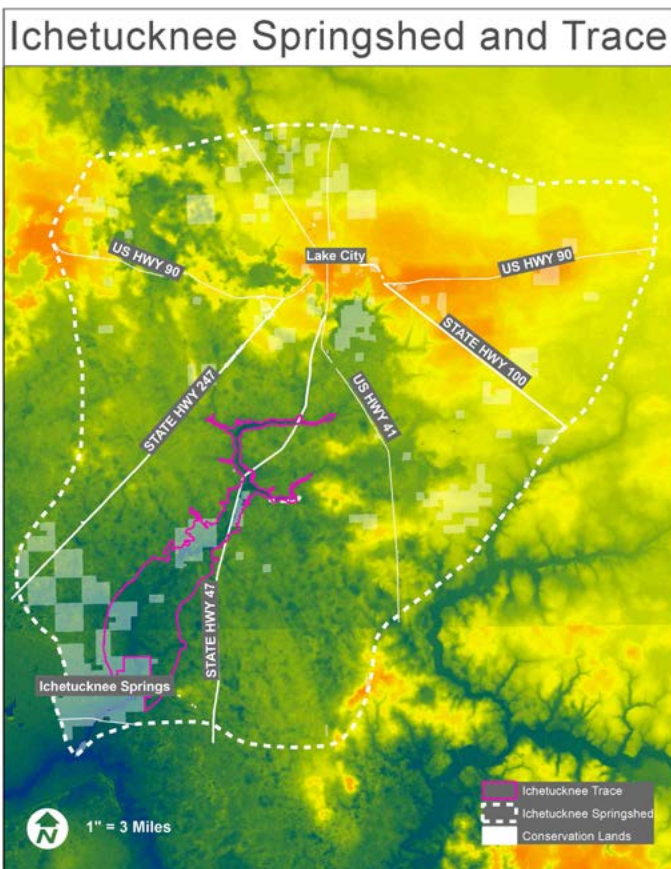
Ichetucknee Head Spring

As families move away from a rural and agricultural way of life to urban centers, the current trend is to convert large tracts of land and working farms into subdivisions and more intensive land uses. ACT with funding from Three Rivers FNPC and its project partners, the Ichetucknee Alliance and Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, perceive these shifts as opportunities to reach out to private landowners and discuss ways to keep family lands intact through estate planning, and conservation and agricultural land easements.

Just like a conservation easement, agricultural easements maintain the rural character of the landscape and protect land from future intensification of use or development. Once agricultural land is protected, it can be maintained as a productive farm for future generations to come and is required to adhere to Best Management Practices for protecting soil and water.

ACT works hard in a variety of different ways to leverage grants and donations to protect these lands: we can help landowners apply for assistance and act as facilitators with state and federal agencies, and will continue reaching out to private landowners about the ways they can protect their land and also benefit our springs and waterways.

Please contact Erica Hernandez at act.eric@gmail.com or Melissa Hill at act.melissah@gmail.com if you are interested in learning more about conservation easements.





PRAIRIE CREEK BANDING LAB (PCBL)

Examining The Lives Of Birds In North Central Florida: A Typical Day

It's a warm October dawn: the air is humid, the ground is damp, the mosquitoes are vicious, and our region is experiencing the peak of fall songbird migration. My interns and I hastily unfurl nets in anticipation of what this morning may bring and what they, as students, will learn.

Every half hour, we run our circuit of 12 mist nets strategically situated along edge habitat in a mosaic of hardwood hammocks and old field grasslands. The nets are so sheer that they appear translucent, and, when a bird flies into one, it is enmeshed in one of the baggy pockets. We approach a net and observe two small bodies seemingly dangling in midair.

Extraction of birds from mist nets is an art. It takes keen observation and plenty of practice to be able to carry it out in a manner that is quick, safe, and that minimizes any stress the birds might experience. We focus first on the smaller of the two birds – a house wren. I showcase my method of extraction to my interns by narrating my mental process. My interns listen intently as I list out a step-by-step process, which culminates in the bird's release from the net. The wren is placed into a small, cotton bag until we return to the lab for processing. I offer the opportunity to extract the second bird, a Northern cardinal, to one of my interns. Once the second extraction is complete, we proceed along the circuit, extracting birds from each net as we make our way back to the lab.

There are a number of variable factors to record when a bird is processed, including age, sex, wing chord length, and weight. We will not band a bird we cannot identify. The interns must accurately examine the flight feathers, the plumage, and the overall condition of the bird in order to ensure that the data we record and submit is pure and consistent.

A lightweight aluminum band, inscribed with a unique 9-digit identification code, is secured to the lower leg of the bird with a pair of banding pliers. Each bird requires a specific band size and will carry the band for the duration of its life. If and when the bird is recaptured, its code is reported to the Federal Banding Lab in order to discover where the bird was originally banded. This information is crucial to our understanding of how migratory birds navigate the landscape, and to establish site fidelity for wintering, breeding, or stopover sites.

It's now roughly 11am, and the heat of midday sun is fast approaching. It's time to close the nets. My interns and I have had a successful day of banding. While PCBL is still a fledgling facility, I hope that its presence in the region will have a lasting impact in the avian conservation arena and will continue to serve as a vital resource for students and professionals. PCBL is a collaborative initiative between the Alachua Audubon Society and ACT.

Story and Photo By Jonathan Varol,
Alachua Audubon Society



Indigo Bunting



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Randi Cameon

Photo of Randi with CrEEK kids

Laughter, joy, and awe of nature are contagious when Randi Cameon is near. For the last decade, Randi has been a devoted ACT volunteer and a visionary when it comes to providing nature-based education for Alachua and Putnam counties.

Randi grew up in the urban concrete jungle of Miami, never visiting the Everglades or the Keys or spending much time outdoors at all as a young person. When she came to Gainesville at the age of 17 for college, her world view changed forever. She fell in love with the springs, rivers, and forests of Alachua County and surrounding areas, and met lifelong friends who introduced her to biking, hiking, kayaking and canoeing. Her discovery and love of nature has found new meaning since her retirement from the health profession and a pivotal promise that she made.

In 2009, Randi's very dear friend Kathy Cantwell was dying. Kathy, one of Gainesville's environmental heroes who was instrumental in the acquisitions of Little Orange Creek and Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery, gathered and instructed her inner circle of devoted friends to keep working on the projects that she had set in motion after she was gone. Kathy had seen the Little Orange Creek project through the purchase of the land, but there was much more to do in order to fulfill obligations and develop it into a public park.

Her vision was for her friends and community to start a citizen support organization that would advocate for and assist in the development of the public nature park and preserve. Kathy said to her friend, "Randi, you're going to make this happen", and Randi has never faltered in the commitment she made to Kathy.

She immediately got busy writing grants and gathering volunteers and was instrumental in forming the Friends of Little Orange Creek (FLOC) which partnered with the City of Hawthorne to bring the vision of a nature park and environmental education center to fruition. In addition to serving on the board for eight years, she has been a spearhead for funding the permitting and renovation projects at the nature center.

In the following years, Randi has been an essential partner in helping ACT provide outdoor environmental education programs at Little Orange Creek Nature Park to students from 15 elementary schools in Putnam and Alachua counties. She has also taken the lead on organizing events such as Yoga on the Prairie and Nature Play Days for toddlers at ACT's Tusawilla Preserve. For many years, Randi thought she was fulfilling her promise to continue Kathy's vision and purpose, but today she recognizes that it has really become her own vision and purpose. Thank you, Randi, for all you do – for us, for nature, and for the kids!

WELCOME

NEW STAFF & BOARD



MARY JANE ANGELO, Esq.

ACT Board Member

Mary Jane Angelo is a Professor of Law, Director of the Environmental and Land Use Law Program, and Alumni Research Scholar at the University of Florida Levin College of Law. She is also Affiliate Faculty in both the University of Florida School of Natural Resources and Water Institute. She received her B.S., with High Honors, in biological sciences from Rutgers University, and both her M.S., in Entomology, and J.D., with Honors, from the University of Florida.

She has published extensively on a variety of environmental law topics including pesticide law, endangered species law, water and wetlands law, sustainable agriculture, the regulation of genetically modified organisms, and the relationship between law and science.

Prior to joining academia, Professor Angelo practiced as an environmental lawyer for many years. She served in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of the Administrator and Office of General Counsel in Washington, D.C., and as Senior Assistant General Counsel for the St. Johns River Water Management District in Florida.



DOMINICK HOLDEN

Land Management Specialist

Dominick was hired to help promote restoration ecology in Alachua County in September of 2019. He has completed a Bachelor's of Science degree in Outdoor Recreation & Education from Ohio University. Dominick has worked in seven different states and enjoys traveling. He previously worked two terms for AmeriCorps, fueling a passion for conservation work.



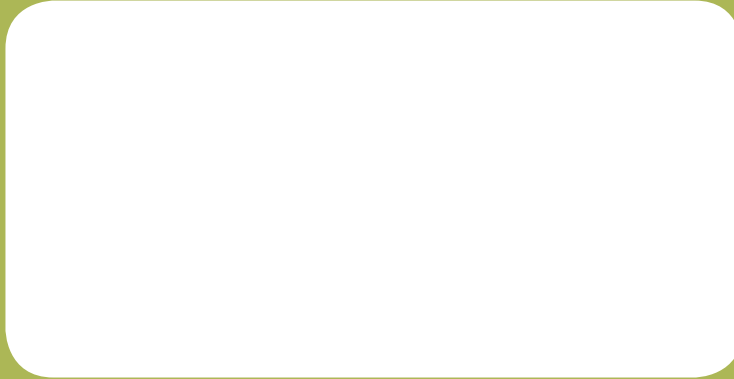
RACHEL TOWNSEND

Land Management Specialist

Rachel comes to ACT as a life-long nature enthusiast and adventurer. She has a B.A. from Florida State University and two years of AmeriCorps experience in Montana and Florida. Her dedication for restoration work is buried deep in sharing Florida ecosystems and she can often be found exploring the native waterways.



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GRACE HOWELL, Conservation Projects Coordinator

MELISSA HILL, Santa Fe River Basin Project Coordinator

BYRON FLAGG, Conservation Land Negotiator

BARRY COULLETTE, Private Lands Prescribed Fire Specialist

STEVE WASP, Land Management Specialist

DOMINICK HOLDEN, Land Management Specialist

RACHEL TOWNSEND, Land Management Specialist

JOE NIEVES, Land Management Specialist

Since 1988, the mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) has been to protect the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easements.

ACT is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity and receives no government grants for general operating support; we rely on contributions from private individuals, corporations, and foundations. Donations may be tax deductible, however ACT does not provide tax advice.

Alachua Conservation Trust's charitable solicitation number is CH12693. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free (800) 435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

ANABEL ANDERSON - NEWSLETTER LAYOUT AND DESIGN