

ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST

# *Gazetteer*

FALL 2020

Leaving A Legacy of Land



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail  
Papilio Glaucus

Photo By Tedd Greenwald

# FALL 2020 UPCOMING EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER

**23** - What's a Body to Do? Conservation Benefits of Natural Burial\*  
6pm to 7pm

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## OCTOBER

**11** - Guided Paddle with Lars Andersen  
@ Upper Santa Fe River & Springs  
9am to 1pm

**13** - Leaving a Legacy of Land: Conservation Easements\*  
6pm to 7pm

**23-26** - Virtual McIntosh 1890s Festival

**25** - Pumpkin Spice & Everything Nice  
@ Rockwood Park  
1pm to 3pm

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## NOVEMBER

**7-8** - Virtual Gainesville Downtown Festival & Arts Show  
10am to 5pm

**18** - An Introduction to Heirs' Property and Its Impact on Florida Land Ownership\*  
6pm to 7pm

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## DECEMBER

**1** - Giving Tuesday Online Global Giving Day

**1** - Virtual CSA 2020 Silent Auction Kickoff  
4:00pm

**5** - Guided Paddle with Lars Andersen  
@ Prairie Creek  
9am to 1pm

**18** - Virtual CSA 2020 Silent Auction Ends  
4:00pm

**18** - Virtual Holiday Mingle  
6:30pm to 8pm

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## JANUARY

**23** - Conservation 365 Annual Tree Planting  
@ Prairie Creek Preserve  
9am to 1pm

**30-31** - Flatwoods Fire & Nature Festival  
@ UF/IFAS Austin Cary Forest  
10am to 3pm

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## MARCH

**13** - SAVE THE DATE: Conservation Stewards Awards  
@ Prairie Creek Lodge  
5:30pm to 9:30pm

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### \*Keep Florida Wild Virtual Series Online Event

Due to Covid-19, all events are subject to cancellation or rescheduling. Visit [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events) for event updates



*Cephalanthus occidentalis* commonly known as the Button Bush

## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

### Adjusting Our Events & Activities Amid a Pandemic

This past year has been a challenge for us all as we've faced a global pandemic. Despite the need to stay socially distant right now, ACT's staff and board are continuing to work together, even if remotely, to bring hope and a healthy environment to the communities we serve. Below are some of the steps we are taking to safely further our conservation and education efforts during this time.

Earlier this year, we made the decision to cancel the 21st Annual Conservation Stewards Awards (CSAs) to help limit the spread of Covid-19 in the community. While we were looking forward to hosting what would have been an amazing event, we felt that it was in the best interest of our guests, volunteers, and staff to cancel the event and refocus our efforts on planning an even better Conservation Stewards Awards in 2021. Not all aspects of the 2020 CSAs have been cancelled. Turn to page 6 to learn more about how we are bringing a favorite CSA pastime to you virtually later this year!

Other in-person events, including volunteer activities, were also canceled during the spring and summer months. We plan to resume in-person events and volunteering as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we invite you to learn more about our Keep Florida Wild Virtual Series, which brings live webinar events and short videos on important conservation topics to you. Turn to page 18 for more info about what we have in store for this educational program in the future!

As a precaution, ACT's office at Prairie Creek Lodge was closed to the public and all staff transitioned to working remotely to do our part in limiting the spread of the virus. We will continue to check emails and voicemails regularly, so please feel free to contact us at (352) 373-1078 or [info@alachuaconservation-trust.org](mailto:info@alachuaconservation-trust.org) if you need assistance.

While our office may be closed, our nature parks and preserves remain open to individuals, families with children, and for small-group, day-use of no more than 10 people per group. We understand the vital importance of outdoor exploration and recreation for all to help keep us healthy during this time. We do ask that all visitors practice social distancing from other small groups while enjoying ACT's public trails and natural spaces.

Over the next few months, ACT staff and board will continue to monitor developments surrounding Covid-19 and provide updates about our activities through our website and social media pages. We'd like to extend our deepest gratitude to those in our community who are working tirelessly to help keep us all healthy and safe, especially the doctors, nurses, EMTs and other first responders. Thank you for your service.

Lastly, a special thanks to all of you for your unwavering support during this difficult time. Conservation efforts are needed now more than ever. Without our many wonderful and dedicated donors, volunteers, and community partners, we could not do this important work to protect Florida's natural resources. Stay safe and healthy this fall, and we look forward to seeing you in person again in the future!



Photo By Kim Davidson

## MAKING NATURAL SPACES

### A Space for All

During the current global health crisis, many of us have retreated to outdoor spaces to find peace and rejuvenation. However, as a land trust that is working to create safe natural spaces for all, we acknowledge that not everyone has an equal experience in nature and that many members of our community face issues of inequality and injustice every day.

The mission of ACT is to protect land, water, and wildlife for the benefit of our working region. However, we must underscore that historically ACT has not directly addressed the intersection of our work and the inequality and systemic oppression that Black, indigenous, people of color, and under-resourced communities experience to access green spaces, clean air and water, and feel safe in public places.

We know that change must begin internally. As a staff and board, we are creating an action-oriented plan to better address this intersectionality between our work as a land conservation nonprofit and the injustices that exist in our community. As our action plan further develops, ACT looks forward to sharing our ideas with you.

Until then, we want to note that our organization is currently taking the following first steps:

- 1 Requiring and providing training on equality and representation for all current ACT staff and board.
- 2 Elevating the voices of existing organizations and the work they are doing to support marginalized communities and the environment.
- 3 Creating a permanent article in our Gazetteer newsletter to update the community on our work towards equality and representation.

ACT recognizes that our organization has a role to play in creating better access to nature, recreation, environmental education, and job opportunities in the environmental field for all races, genders, and sexual orientations. There is a lot more work for us to do and we are grateful for your support and feedback as we take the needed next steps in helping make Nature a place for all.



## CRAFTING OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES FOR ALL

Check out these great organizations that are working to create a better outdoor experience for all through their programs and outreach.

Cultural Arts Coalition's Environmental Ambassadors and East Gainesville Afterschool Science Clubs (Gainesville, FL)  
[www.CulturalArtsCoalition.org](http://www.CulturalArtsCoalition.org)

Outdoor Afro (National and statewide)  
[www.OutdoorAfro.com](http://www.OutdoorAfro.com)

Melanin Basecamp's Guide to Outdoor Allyship (National)  
[www.MelaninBasecamp.com](http://www.MelaninBasecamp.com)

Diversify Outdoors (National and statewide)  
[www.DiversifyOutdoors.com](http://www.DiversifyOutdoors.com)



## TREE FEST SPONSORS

Fund Over 63,200 Trees Despite Annual Event Cancellation

For more than five years, Solar Impact and Swamp Head Brewery have partnered with the local community to raise funds to plant trees in Alachua County. Due to Covid-19, the annual Tree Fest event customarily held at Swamp Head Brewery was postponed and ultimately canceled, but that did not stop local businesses and individuals from supporting important conservation efforts. This year, thirty businesses and individuals donated to support future tree planting efforts at ACT's Little Orange Creek Preserve in Hawthorne, Florida. Although we were unable to safely host the 6th Annual Tree Fest event, we are thankful to those who stepped up to show their support for ACT's efforts to restore longleaf pine forests in North Central Florida. Over 63,200 longleaf pine seedlings will still be planted later this year, thanks to the 2020 Tree Fest sponsors!



## TREE FEST SPONSORS

- Advanced Systems
- Austin, Gillman & Lovano
- Ben Cannon Foundation
- Brian & Erin Scarborough
- Chevron at Hunter's Crossing
- City Electric Supply – Gainesville, FL
- Clear Sound Audiology
- Cruz Davis Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
- Davis Rembert
- First Federal Bank
- FMD Green, Inc.
- Gainesville Co-Housing
- Gainesville Health & Fitness
- Halcyon Dive Systems
- Israel & Nancy Winikor
- Jordan Glen School
- McGurn Management Company
- Partners Insurance Agency
- Paul & Charity Ackerman
- Ronald & Evelyn Jones
- Santa Fe Audubon Society, Inc.
- Sexton & Schnoll
- Soil & Water Engineering Technology, Inc.
- Solar Impact
- Swamp Head Brewery
- Tillman Hartley
- Wendell & Sandra Stainsby
- Westwood Solar



## CONSERVATION STEWARDS AWARDS

### Growing Up Florida Wild

**H**ow do you recap something that didn't happen? For the first time in twenty-one years, we at Alachua Conservation Trust had to make a gut-wrenching decision: first to postpone and then eventually to cancel what had become, for us and for so many others in our local conservation community, THE big event we all looked forward to each spring. Covid-19 was just sweeping into our area at that time, and our concern for ACT supporters – many of whom are older or have underlying health issues - was just too great for us to risk an outbreak. Over the years, we'd managed to face down an array of weather, insect, logistical and personal disasters and go on with "the show," but we admit that we had no special "plan B" for a pandemic. Now, as weeks have turned into months, we're finally beginning to realize and appreciate the luxury we enjoyed in being able to hold such big and beloved gatherings unimpeded for so long, and we're currently wrestling with how to conduct a meaningful Holiday Mingle in December, a full nine months after this all really began for us in earnest back in mid-March.

In this same space, we'd normally display many photos of happy and celebratory friends in groups both large and small; we'd remind everyone of the many accomplishments of our 2020 honorees - Kate Lee, Ian Kress and Dr. Willa Drummond - whose decades of service to our organization and to the conservation community as a whole so very much deserve recognition.

We'd talk about the great music of The Savants of Soul, the fabulous meal prepared by Sandra and her crew at Elegant Events, and we'd thank our many wonderful corporate sponsors, silent auction donors and working partners whose

## DON'T MISS OUR AUCTION

We're bringing a favorite CSA pastime to you virtually this year! Join us for an online silent auction featuring items donated for this year's Conservation Stewards Awards. The auction will take place from December 1st to December 18th. Auction winners will be announced at ACT's Holiday Mingle on December 18th. Additional details coming soon to: [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events).

support year-round contributes not only to the Conservation Stewards Awards, but to every event and activity we conduct. We'd tout our event earnings, which still reached almost the \$30,000 mark thanks to our sponsors and ticket purchasers who chose to convert their ticket price to a full donation. And we'd be gearing everyone up for our 22nd Annual Conservation Stewards Awards in March 2021. While we're still optimistic it will happen, we're now trying to gauge what it will look like in our new "normal" world of persistent social distancing.

We hope you will help us plan for next year by completing and returning the survey that we've enclosed in this newsletter; more than anything else, we want to provide you, our friends and supporters, with every opportunity to gather and enjoy one another's company in as safe and comfortable a way as possible, and the survey is your way to let us know how you feel about that, as well as about our many other programs and services. Until we gather again, we wish you all the best of health, and we sincerely hope you're able get out onto one or all of ACT's Preserves and bask in the singular thing we can still deeply appreciate without restriction – the glory and the beauty of the natural world around us – as we continue growing upward and onward, Florida Wild together.

# 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL

# CONSERVATION STEWARDS AWARDS



## GROWING UP FLORIDA WILD

2020 CORPORATE SPONSORS



### Live Oak



CRANE RAMEN



### Longleaf Pine



EAST END EATERY



Waterlust



Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop



solar impact



Salter • Feiber ATTORNEYS AT LAW



A royal possible restroom experience

### Cypress



Aachua Audubon Society



BLUE HIGHWAY a pizzeria



MICANOPY ANIMAL HOSPITAL



Gainesville Health & Fitness



SWAMP HEAD BREWERY



Merrill Lynch Bank of America Corporation Baker duBois Group



DEREN LAND SURVEYING



JonesEdmunds



TAPESOUTH



SACHEL'S PIZZA

### Magnolia



LET'S CLIMB TREES! CANOPY CLIMBERS



Fisher & Blakeslee PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS



KESTREL ECOLOGICAL SERVICES



searchlight yoga



alta Fine Printing • Digital Printing • Mail Services



McGURN INVESTMENT COMPANY



Edward La Crosse VOYA VOYA FINANCIAL ADVISORS event tickets center



Sweetwater Branch LODGING & EVENTS Distinctly Gainesville



water & air RESEARCH, INC. Celebrating 30 Years

### Tupelo



WORKMAN



Atlantic Design Homes



REI CO-OP



Cypress Grove Brewery



CYPRESS GROVE BREWERY



MERIEUX NutriSciences



John Moran Florida Nature Photography

### Wiregrass



CRUZ DAVIS DENTAL



Mosswood Farm Store & Bakehouse MICANOPY, FL



The SUSTAINABLE DESIGN GROUP



VINE SOURDOUGH BAKERY



THORNEBROOK gallery



PARTY TIME RENTALS



JAPANESE GARDEN

# GATORS GIVE BACK

UF Campaign for Charities



For more than a decade, employees and faculty from the University of Florida have generously donated over \$232,800 to Alachua Conservation Trust for conservation and environmental education through the UF Campaign for Charities payroll deduction program. If you are a UF staffer, please consider selecting Alachua Conservation Trust as your charity of choice during this year's open enrollment period. The Leadership Campaign kick off is set for September 8th and the General Campaign will follow from September 28th through October 16th. Thank you, Gator Nation, for your continued support of ACT and its work protecting land, water, and wildlife for current and future generations!



## COMMUNITY-FUNDED CONSERVATION

Makes an Impact 365 Days a Year

For nonprofits like ACT, every donation we receive, no matter how big or small, helps get us closer towards our goal of protecting Florida land for all. Regular, recurring donations are a simple way to help ACT with its long-term management of existing public lands and also make it possible to protect more of Florida in the future. With ACT's new monthly donation program, supporting conservation is second-nature.

Launched in early 2020, Conservation 365 allows supporters to join together as part of a growing community of recurring donors who receive VIP access to ACT events, preserves, updates, and much more. Membership options range from a \$15 recurring monthly donation (or about 50 cents per day) to a \$100 recurring monthly donation (about \$3.25 per day). In addition to the knowledge that you are making an impact for conservation 365 days a year, your membership also includes invitations to member-only tours of select ACT properties and early ticket access for the annual Conservation Stewards Awards. In recognition of members' ongoing commitment to conservation, they will also be invited to participate in a special tree planting event at the beginning of each year followed by a thank you luncheon at Prairie Creek Preserve.

Over the last few months, the Conservation 365 Community has grown to more than 45 monthly donors who are contributing more than \$15,000 per year to local conservation. "We are so thankful to everyone who has joined the Conservation 365 Community especially during this time," said Heather Obara, ACT's Community Outreach Coordinator. "These monthly donations provide significant sustainable support to ACT in the event that grant funding or other income sources are not available for land management activities or other conservation and environmental education efforts."

If you are interested in learning more about how you can show your support for conservation, visit [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/Conservation365](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/Conservation365) to get additional details on this new and exciting monthly donation opportunity.



Photo By Alison Blakeslee



## A ONCE IN A LIFETIME PADDLE

Would you like to see Santa Fe Springs Preserve before it officially opens to the public? Join ACT for a paddle on the Santa Fe River with local guide and Florida Master Naturalist Lars Andersen on Sunday, October 11th. For more info or to register, visit [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events).

## ANOTHER CONSERVATION VICTORY

### Santa Fe Springs Preserve Finally Complete

On May 27, 2020, with significant support of the community, ACT purchased the final piece of a 254-acre puzzle known as Santa Fe Springs Preserve. This conservation victory permanently protects two freshwater springs, 1.3 river miles along the Santa Fe River and Olustee Creek, and the surrounding uplands, creating increased benefits and protections for this entire region's drinking water.

“ACT is endlessly grateful for the support our community has shown in response to this project,” said ACT’s Executive Director, Tom Kay. “For three years, ACT has been working diligently to purchase this property and now, thanks to hundreds of individual contributions, support from partners like the Suwannee River Water Management District, and grant awards from organizations like The Conservation Alliance and private family foundations, ACT was finally able to secure the \$1.4 million dollars needed to protect this property forever.”

In addition to the fundamental conservation value of protecting two freshwater springs, the preserve itself is truly stunning and connects to the Santa Fe River watershed in incredible ways. Turning south off of County Road 18 in Columbia County, Florida, it’s easy to sense the beauty of the region. Rolling hills leading to the river bank instantly draw the eye to the forested river’s edge. Tucked in this forest is the smaller, unnamed seepage spring. Found above the river, secluded under the trees, with a flow that trickles down the banks into the waiting river, the spring gurgles and glistens in the filtered sunlight. Tall live oaks, cypress trees, blossoming chickasaw plums and native azaleas dot the river banks and steep bluffs along the Santa Fe River and Olustee Creek. Large alligators, wading birds, turtles, catfish, garfish and other water creatures can be found along and in the river within the vicinity of Santa Fe Springs Preserve.

However, none of these natural treasures can prepare you for the view of the preserve’s namesake – Santa Fe Spring. Once considered a first magnitude spring, now classified as a second magnitude, Santa Fe Spring is the most upstream Floridan Aquifer spring on the Santa Fe River. Spanning about 200 feet in diameter with a short run to the river, the spring basin is surrounded by bluffs almost 20 feet above the water’s edge, and it pumps out an average of 44 million gallons of water a day. Depending on water levels, the depth of Santa Fe Spring is over 70 feet in places and is connected to the Floridan Aquifer via a cave system close to 150 feet deep. The spring system is extremely dynamic as it varies in levels, clarity, and flow. Eventually, its waters flow from the Santa Fe River into the Suwannee River and to the Gulf of Mexico.



Photo By Alison Blakeslee

In preparation for public use, ACT will be installing multi-use trails, a parking area, and kiosks that have a very low impact on the springs and river. Additionally, measures will be taken to restore the property to its natural state by removing old structures and replanting longleaf pine in what once were agricultural fields. ACT anticipates holding a grand opening of Santa Fe Springs by the end of 2021.

Santa Fe Springs Preserve is one of MANY projects ACT has prioritized along the Santa Fe River to protect this ecological corridor and the water quality for our region. But the work is never done here, and your donations make each project possible. We look forward to celebrating the conservation victory of Santa Fe Springs Preserve at the grand opening with you next year!



## TREASURED LANDS PRESERVED FOREVER

Anne & John Shermyen

Nestled in the landscape of western Alachua County, the Shermyen's hilltop property provides a panoramic view of hardwood forests and lush pasture with grazing cattle bordering San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park. Thanks to Anne and John Shermyen, longtime supporters of ACT, this vista and its surrounding landscape will never see development as they chose to place a conservation easement on their property this year.

Part of what makes this permanent protection so special is that both Anne and John know that their land could have looked very different from its current scenic beauty. As they have a strong history of working to protect springs, rivers, and land in Florida, it's no surprise to learn that when they realized the property was slated for development into a subdivision, they did what they could to make sure the land stayed in its natural state. Hard work and opportunity eventually allowed the Shermyens to purchase the property before the conversion could take place, and they have since devoted themselves to stewardship of the property by removing invasive plants, raising grass-fed beef, and providing a valuable buffer zone to the adjacent state park. Thanks to their efforts, the roughly 90-acre property never turned into a

subdivision and now, thanks to their generous donation of a conservation easement finalized just last month, it never will. "We'd love to think that our children and grandchildren would want to make a home here, but it was very important to us that it would remain minimally developed in the future regardless of choices they might make," said John.



*Everyone should know that a conservation easement is something they could consider no matter what their property is like.*



As stewards of the land, John and Anne are acutely aware of the way that their ownership could impact the creatures that rely on it. Their choice to protect the property with a conservation easement is proof of their commitment to protecting the resources that ultimately every Floridian needs to thrive. "Everyone should know that a conservation easement is something they could consider no matter what their property is like," said John. "Every single one of these gifts and conservation easements add up and are meaningful."

In addition to the connectivity benefits this land brings, wildlife frequents the landscape. "You can always discover new things - whether it's the pollinators on the wildflowers, a gopher tortoise digging its hole, deer running across the property, coyotes calling in the distance, or Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites in the air," said Anne.

## PLANNING AHEAD

### Securing the Future

An old joke has it that only two things in this world are certain: death and taxes. In some important and perhaps even comforting ways, estate planning offers ACT donors a chance to have some control over both “certainties” and feel good about doing it, secure in the knowledge that they have helped ensure conservation efforts important to future generations.


A planned gift can also be an important way to maximize the financial rewards of your philanthropy. A wide range of tax and income incentives allowed by federal law are designed to promote donor generosity and might benefit you as well as ACT and the environment. Some of the most common bequest and trust arrangements are mentioned below, but would-be donors are encouraged to consult an attorney or tax and financial adviser for more information. One size does not fit all, but all estate donations benefit ACT, so thank you for considering long-term planning with conservation in mind.

Some of the options you might want to consider with your professional advisor include Wills, Bequests, Devise of

Property, Contingent Bequests and Residuary Bequests, Charitable Remainders, Life Insurance, Annuities and Retirement plans. We have some general information about these options on our website at [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/planned-giving](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/planned-giving). By the way, you can specify that your support be used in the area of greatest need or you may apply restrictions that it be used for programs related to environmental education, land conservation (acquisition or management/restoration), outdoor recreation, or historic preservation.

If you’ve included ACT in your estate plan, please let us know. The details of your planned gift are not necessary, but we want to recognize your generosity. And please feel free to have your attorney or financial planner contact us for further details and assistance with any possible arrangements.

Done properly, estate planning can be a Win-Win-Win situation: good for you, good for charity, and good for the environment!



Thinking about leaving a planned gift for ACT but have questions concerning the process? You can contact us via email at: [info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org](mailto:info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org)

Photo By Kim Davidson



Photo By Alison Blakeslee

## DYNAMIC CONSERVATION

### Preserving a Corridor on the Rim of Paynes Prairie

In the mid 1970's, Sylvia Scudder and Perran Ross fell in love with a place. At the time, they were renting a house nearby, but they daydreamed about someday owning the beautifully wooded 40 acres next door, which stretched between the north rim of Paynes Prairie and Rocky Point Road. In 1992, they realized that dream. From the moment they obtained the property, they began considering options for protecting the land after they were gone. Earlier this year, they donated a conservation easement to ACT that will preserve this important wildlife corridor, ensuring that this property will continue to thrive for many years to come.

Now retired, Sylvia, a soil scientist who managed the zooarchaeology collection at the Florida Museum of Natural History, and Perran, a professor of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at UF who studied crocodiles and alligators, have found a wealth of ecological, archaeological and historical wonders over the years in this slice of Florida paradise. The land features mixed woodlands typical of the Paynes Prairie Rim, an old field grown in with loblolly pine, several wetlands, and a number of ancient live oaks that were likely there when William Bartram passed through Rocky Point in 1774.

After purchasing the land, they spent two years renovating the historic house there. Built out of longleaf "heart pine," the house

was relocated to the property in 1945 from its original location on S. Main St in Gainesville. They have lived on the property ever since, creating a homestead and lifestyle that is joyfully in tune with the land they love. Portions of the forested upland are regularly burned to enhance wildlife habitat. Three acres are fenced off in the center of the property for the homestead and gardens. Their main passion is raising and training Catahoula leopard dogs for cattle and farm work. They also enjoy growing fruits and vegetables, raising chickens and a hog, and butterfly gardening. Perran is also an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman. Sylvia takes great pleasure in wildlife observation, and monitors several game cameras that capture the stealthiest visitors in action. "We see the coyotes less than once a year but our cameras suggest that they're out there every night," she says. They have seen sandhill cranes, turkey, bobcat, bear, coyotes, deer, nesting vultures, and gopher tortoises. Their first conversations with ACT began in the early 90's when the organization was in its formative years.



*The conservation easement constrains the activity of people, including us, and leaves the natural environment free to adapt to whatever changes will occur.*



In the meantime, they were able to sell 15 acres to the State of Florida as an upland buffer addition to Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. In February of 2020, after many years of careful consideration and negotiation, the couple completed their generous donation to ACT of a perpetual conservation easement over the remaining 27-acres, which will be maintained as an ecological corridor and wildlife sanctuary. This parcel provides important

connectivity from the Prairie to natural and conservation lands to the north, which include ACT's Serenola Forest Preserve. Perran and Sylvia embrace the dynamic forces of nature that have shaped and changed the landscape over time. "The conservation easement constrains the activity of people, including us, and leaves the natural environment free to adapt to whatever changes will occur," says Perran. They also recognize that active management is a necessary component of maintaining the biodiversity of the property. "If we did nothing, it would quickly become overgrown. But we will continue to control invasive plants and use the judicious application of fire, mowing and other management activities to help preserve the inherent quality and diversity of the land," says Perran. "We are absolutely elated. It is something that we always wanted to do. We feel that it will make a substantial contribution to conservation in this area and it pleases us very much that the land will remain in its current condition in perpetuity."



Photo By Alison Blakeslee

## CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

### A Valuable Tool for Protecting Landscapes

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust, like ACT, or a government agency that permanently limits the use of the land to protect its conservation values. It allows the landowner to own and use their land and to sell it or pass it on to their heirs. If an easement meets specific criteria defined by the IRS, donating an easement can result in reduced estate and income taxes.

Entering into an easement is voluntary, but by doing so, the landowner prevents future owners from significantly altering the land use. When ACT accepts an easement, it is taking on the responsibility to monitor and enforce the conditions of the easement agreement in perpetuity. Land trusts such as ACT typically require that an endowment be created to establish our ability to monitor and enforce the easement conditions. ACT has protected more than 4,457 privately-owned acres with conservation easements.

For those with strong connections to their land, a well-considered conservation easement will ensure the survival of a cherished landscape for future generations to appreciate. Are you interested in placing a conservation easement on your property? Visit [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/protect-your-land](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/protect-your-land) to learn more about easements or contact us at (352) 373-1078 to discuss the available options for protecting your land.





Photo By Alison Blakeslee

## SIMPLE THINGS

### For Our Springs

Living in North Central Florida, we know our lands are unique and worth protecting. Ask any landowner, and they can tell you exactly what makes their property special and worth maintaining. Often what gets overlooked is what's just beneath their feet, the connectedness to the Floridan Aquifer and our beautiful Florida springs. With increasing development and commercial conversion of rural and natural lands in North Central Florida, both individual properties and the health of Florida's water is at stake. Alachua Conservation Trust is committed to helping each landowner find options to protect their lands' unique and special features while simultaneously connecting their legacy to the protection of Florida's waters. One of the very effective ways ACT is doing this is through conservation easements.

Conservation easements keep the land private and protected forever, regardless of who purchases or inherits the land in the future. While still allowing the landowner to live on the property and manage it to suit their needs through land uses like hunting, harvesting pine trees, cattle grazing, and building a family home, conservation easements protect the property from any intensification of land use such as residential subdivision or the installation of industrialized animal feedlots. Conservation easements are mutually agreed upon, permanent protections between private landowners and entities like ACT. They can be donated for potential tax benefits, sold, or a combination of both through a blended approach.

This year, ACT was awarded a grant by the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida (FWFF), a statewide organization that has raised more than \$36 million for conservation, outdoor recreation, and education programs through the Protect Florida Springs Tag Grant Program. ACT is putting these grant funds towards a communication campaign in some of our most sensitive springsheds affecting the Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers with the goal of helping private landowners connect with resources to protect their farms, timber lands, and natural areas through conservation easements.

With this grant, ACT created two short films utilizing the local digital broadcast company Studio 601 to capture the personal experience landowners had working with ACT on a conservation easement and what it means to them and their family legacy. In the future, ACT will expand this outreach campaign to radio and newspaper, as well as hold public meetings about conservation easements and land protection throughout the springs region.

ACT is also leveraging this grant from FWFF to acquire funding that will help us purchase conservation easements to protect key areas for springs, as well as surface waters like the Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers. It's our hope that grants like this help us better communicate the tools available to private landowners to protect their property and wild Florida, forever. Visit, [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/aquifer-springs-protection](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/aquifer-springs-protection) to learn more.



## FAREWELL, DOM!

ACT would like to bid a fond farewell to Dominick Holden. Dominick was a member of ACT's Land Management Team from September 2019 through August 2020 and assisted with restoration of conservation lands. He will be missed at ACT and we wish him the best of luck with his move out of state. Thank you, Dom, for your hard work and dedication to land management and restoration!

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## WELCOME, EMILY!

Emily Olmos, *Conservation Projects Specialist*

Ema comes to ACT after completing dual degrees in Environmental and Sustainability Science and Developmental Sociology at Cornell University. She specialized in water resource management, education, and policy. Ema will be managing Rock Bluff Springs as well as assisting with various ACT conservation projects.

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## WELCOME, JOE!

Joe Nieves, *Land Management Specialist*

Joe has been with ACT since 2015, first as an intern and later as a caretaker for Tusculum Preserve and part-time land management staff. Joe recently completed his undergraduate degree at UF. After all these years, we are very excited to welcome him as full-time staff on our Land Management Team!



## FINDING SANITY AND SOLIDARITY

### Through Prescribed Fire

There's nothing quite like the smell of freshly burnt wiregrass, the sound of popping longleaf pine cones, and the team camaraderie that comes with another successful prescribed fire. The Coronavirus pandemic has altered every one of our daily lives, and the ACT Land Management Team is no exception. It's been an interesting learning experience figuring out how to work as a team while maintaining healthy social distancing procedures. What has been the crew's ticket to sanity? Fire.

Protecting and restoring Florida lands is at the epicenter of ACT's mission and prescribed fire is one of the best tools we have to restore our ecosystems. Sandhill, flatwoods, scrub, and so many more of Florida's natural communities thrive with repetitive fire activity. The land management staff has been working at ACT's preserves and alongside multiple partner organizations to ensure our various Florida habitats are seeing happy, healthy controlled burns.

Yet wildland fire is about much more than just the benefits of conservation. To restore a landscape using prescribed fire is a team effort. While social distancing during Covid-19 is essential for everyone's health and safety, it can bring with it the feeling of isolation. As we space our crew along the fire line and work together to fulfill our mission, we find that it is providing us all with exactly the solidarity we need, now more than ever.

## RYAN CROWDER MEMORIAL

### Internship Fund

A decade ago this November, the young and promising life of Ryan Crowder tragically ended, but his legacy endures and still contributes to ACT's ongoing mission. An ardent conservationist, outdoorsman and graduate student at Cornell University, Ryan was working on sustainable practices with local fishing families in the Pearl Lagoon of Nicaragua when he was murdered by a street gang in Managua at the age of 32.

Ryan had come by his love of the outdoors and fishing naturally as he had grown up, explored and fished with his friends and family, including his step-father Hutch Hutchison, on trips to destinations including Dog Island and the Ocklawaha and Santa Fe rivers.

In writing about his life for our Fall 2014 Gazette, his mother Meg Neiderhofer also recalled, "At a critical time in Ryan's young adult life, ACT offered him temporary employment that allowed him to develop skills, be part of a team committed to a noble vision, and make a contribution with his energy to something that mattered."

And so, in the wake of his untimely death, the Ryan Crowder Memorial Internship Fund was established at ACT so that, as Neiderhofer put it, "Other young people could be given a chance to discover similar skills" and thus connect to what she called "the things in life that matter."

In the intervening decade, the fund has allowed ACT to award semester internships to dozens of young people, educate new generations of land conservationists and, at the same time, pay homage to Ryan's memory.

For more information about these internships, call ACT at (352) 373-1078 or contact us at [info@alachuaconservationtrust.org](mailto:info@alachuaconservationtrust.org). Contributions can be made on ACT's website from the donation page by selecting the "Ryan Crowder Memorial Internship Fund" as the designated fund for your donation.



# PRAIRIE CREEK CONSERVATION CEMETERY

Leaving a Lasting Memorial for Our Loved Ones

As you enter ACT's Prairie Creek Preserve, it may take a moment to notice one of its most unique features. When you think of conserving land while limiting negative impacts, you may not think of a cemetery as part of that effort. However, that is exactly what Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery (PCCC) aims to do by providing a natural burial option for those who wish to leave a legacy that gives back to the land.

Nestled within a 93-acre eastern section of the 606-acre Prairie Creek Preserve, PCCC was the fourth certified conservation burial ground to be established in the U.S. and remains today as the only certified conservation burial ground in Florida. PCCC is the result of a partnership between two non-profit organizations: Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) and Conservation Burial, Inc. (CBI). After several years of planning, PCCC officially opened in 2010.

As a certified conservation burial ground, PCCC is considered to be at the highest level of natural burial cemeteries. For a burial to be considered "natural" or "green," three criteria must be met: there can be no embalming, vaults are not utilized in the cemetery, and all burial products must be biodegradable.

Each and every burial at PCCC is unique and special. All graves are dug and prepared by hand by community volunteers. Family and friends of the deceased can participate as much or as little in the burial process as they wish. Visitors often decorate the graves of their loved ones with natural and biodegradable materials found in the cemetery. All those who come to have a natural burial or visit the cemetery contribute to the land as a living memorial and to our community's legacy of conservation.

Conservation Burial, Inc. collaborates with ACT to manage, protect, and restore the land for all living things. This includes maintaining a conservation easement that permanently protects the land from development and keeps it open to the public. As both a cemetery and preserve, PCCC invites visitors to connect with Nature in new and meaningful ways through its vibrant, diverse ecosystem with trails for visitors to hike and explore 365 days a year.



## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Join representatives from CBI and ACT for "What's a Body to Do? Conservation Benefits of Natural Burial" on September 23, 2020, from 6pm to 7pm. Register for this virtual event at [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events).



Phone:  
(352) 317-7307

Email:  
[Info@prairiecreekconservationcemetery.org](mailto:Info@prairiecreekconservationcemetery.org)

Website:  
[www.PrairieCreekConservationCemetery.org](http://www.PrairieCreekConservationCemetery.org)

Visit *Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery*

Prairie Creek Preserve  
7204 SE County Road 234  
Gainesville, FL 32641



Photo By Alison Blakeslee

## KEEP FLORIDA WILD SERIES

Connects You to Conservation

Earlier this year, as events were delayed, plans canceled, and meetings moved online, ACT’s staff immediately got to work thinking of ways we could bring conservation to those who were staying safe at home. In April, we announced the Keep Florida Wild Series, a new online series designed to provide entertaining and engrossing environmental programming, as well as interactive opportunities, focused on the diverse ecosystems of North Central Florida.

Over the last few months, ACT has hosted live webinars with local experts on topics such as springs hydrology, edible and medicinal plants, water law, women in conservation, and prescribed fire. Reprises of these previously recorded webinars can also be viewed at home whenever you like by visiting ACT’s YouTube channel or website. Check out our events calendar on page 2 to learn more about upcoming live webinars on topics including natural burial, conservation easements, and heirs’ property.

You can also check out ACT’s Conservation Q&A Videos, which address viewer-submitted questions about Florida ecology and ACT’s work. Ever wonder what types of trees can be found at ACT’s preserves, what happens to wildlife during a prescribed fire, or how land conservation affects human health? These and other questions have been answered for you by ACT’s staff in several fun, short videos! And if you are searching for a new look for your next Zoom call, celebrate Florida wild in style with ACT’s new Keep Florida Wild T-shirt. Proceeds from this exclusive design benefit future conservation efforts and can be purchased at [www.bonfire.com/KeepFLWild](http://www.bonfire.com/KeepFLWild).

Whether you are working from home, sheltering in place, or just prefer to connect online, visit [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/KeepFLWild](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org/KeepFLWild) or follow ACT on social media for the best of North Florida conservation news, fun facts, videos and photos. Show your support for environmental protection with your favorite ACT gear, tune in on your digital device, and leave your troubles behind as you travel with ACT virtually into the natural world.



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## MEMORY LANE

### Plans Beginning to Come Together for Orange Lake Overlook

Last fall, with more than four-hundred supporters chipping in, the historic Orange Lake Overlook citrus shop, packing shed and adjacent 70-acre former orange grove located on the scenic U.S. Highway 441 was acquired and will be preserved forever by ACT. Thanks to significant loans from The Conservation Fund, a national land trust, and a generous private donor, the purchase closed without the need for a commercial bank loan or worse, the deal falling through all together. With a little more than a \$1 million to pay off on this acquisition, all the donations that ACT has continued to receive for the project are critical to the permanent protection of Florida's Finest Vista.

As this project progresses, many of you are sharing stories and/or making your gifts in memory of loved ones: spouses, children, grandparents, cousins, other relatives and friends. In light of this community trend, it only seems fitting that Orange Lake Overlook become a memorial park.

To commemorate all those loved ones lost, for whom donations have or will be made towards Orange Lake Overlook in her/his name, ACT intends to create a "memorial wall" in the old packing house. If you have already made a gift in a loved one's memory, we will be reaching out to you to confirm that it is acceptable with you to include your loved one's name on the memorial. If you are considering making such a gift - especially for someone who had a special affinity for Orange Lake Overlook, the citrus shop that once resided there, or the lake itself - please do so now. With major loan payoffs for Orange Lake Overlook coming due in November of this year, there's no time like the present to make a gift in memory of someone you love.

Make your donations online or by mail, be sure to note that your gift is for Orange Lake Overlook in memory of your loved one, and if you feel so inclined, please share a personal or community-centered story about this treasured place with us. We'd love to hear from you!



Photo By Sean Dowie

## GIVING THANKS

We wish to acknowledge these beloved community members, in whose memory almost \$30,000 has been donated to Alachua Conservation Trust between January and August 2020:

John Alford  
Worth Auxier  
Mark Avery  
Ryan Crowder  
Greg Erdos  
Lorelei Esser

Sally Foote  
Dorothy Hale  
Dean Harris  
Marjorie Hoy  
Thomas Kent  
John Knaub

Pranarose Meiss  
Clifton Nelson  
Julia Reiskind  
Arthur Saarinen  
Jon "Skip" Staiger  
Zot Szurgot



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**HOWARD JELKS**, Fish Biologist - U.S. Geological Survey

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Since 1988, the mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) has been to protect the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around North Central 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.