

Friends **2** Friends

Friends and Volunteers of Refuges Florida Keys
 PO Box 431840 • Big Pine Key • FL • 33043-1840

Fall 2011

Welcome Friends!

Welcome to the newsletter for FAVOR Florida Keys! In upcoming editions we'll have interesting news, reports of recent events, stories of upcoming events and of course, upcoming volunteer opportunities.

In this issue, you'll see that technology is coming to FAVOR and the refuge this fall. Geo-Caching is a new type of treasure hunting, the Key Deer Bookstore has a new computerized system coming on line, the website looks great and you can stay in touch with FAVOR on facebook! We also have a 'spotlight on the species' to give you a closer look at our special Key Deer.

Beach clean ups and planning events are just a couple things that keep our local FAVOR volunteers busy during our "off season". Our members are also taking the lead on an unprecedented partnership with animal advocates to educate people about the needs of wildlife and domestic pets in Our Animal Family.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and we all look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

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From the Fireline...

ALISON HIGGINS

I am sure by now that many of you have driven past the infamous Blue Hole fire and possibly shaken your heads at the blackness that dominates it. As someone that has studied pine rocklands for years, I only see possibilities.

The wonder of the pine rockland is that most of the biodiversity is below your knees. These wildflowers and other endemics need sunlight and space to survive and usually do best in the few years following fire.

Unfortunately, most folks don't see the entire forest for the trees since the pines and palms are the most visible flora. All pine rockland species are adapted to fire, and respond in different ways under different conditions. Slash pine has an incredibly thick bark and has been evidenced to survive even with 85% of their needles scorched. Keys thatch palms, silver palms and saw palmettos protect their "hearts" and resprout from the middle post fire. Listed shrubs like locustberry, long-stalked stopper and pineland strongback will experience "top-kill" but quickly resprout from the roots post fire. Endemic wildflowers such as Keys Partridge Pea and sand flax flourish post fire, with more blooms and seed.



FAVOR is committed to better documenting this circle of life so that we all might better understand the ecology of the pine rocklands. The Blue Hole fire will be especially interesting because it burned much differently than most prescribed fires and therefore has more mosaic of unburned areas, moderate fire intensity areas and high fire intensity areas, all of which favor different species. We invite you to learn with us!

Photos: Top: The morning after the fire. Inset: Pisonia (Pisonia rotundata), found only in Florida Keys pine rocklands springs back to life days later. Right: Big Pine Partridge Pea (C), another Keys pineland endemic, sprouts up between a crack in the rocks. This was one of 20 species found resprouting on a stroll through the Blue Hole fire less than a month post fire (10/10/11).



Animal Welfare Groups Gather to take the Pledge!

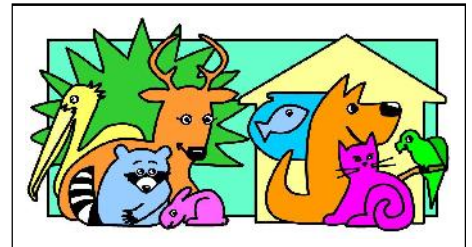
**We cannot change animal behavior,
but we can change our own.**

The Our Animal Family partnership stresses an understanding of the needs of all animals. All animals have a right to a safe and healthy life. Domestic pets need to be well cared for and healthy. Wild creatures deserve to live in a safe environment.

The partnership idea was hatched in 2008 during a series of facilitated workshops to decrease predator pressure on the endangered Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit. Because both native raccoons and non-native feral cats were initially fingered as “problems that needed to be dealt with,” early meetings got a little heated as the group worked through a lot of misinformation and mistrust between the “cat people,” the “wildlife people,” the “bunny people” and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Those that were brave enough or foolhardy enough to keep listening realized that the problem was not the animals, but humans. Cats should never be abandoned. Backyard practices that encourage raccoon misbehavior should be avoided. The once-polarized groups soon agreed upon a comprehensive set of strategies and established a proactive coalition to work together.

The Our Animal Family movement has now becoming a way for all animal organizations to pool their effort, talents and money towards the big picture. The group has worked together on grant writing, appeared in a documentary by American Bird Conservancy and is now a kicking off an educational campaign. For more information, go to OurAnimalFamily.org or follow us on facebook.



OUR ANIMAL FAMILY

This colorful design depicting ‘Happy pets INSide and happy wild things OUTside is the brainchild of Alison Higgins and art by Nancy Chatelaine, both Favor board

The local effort focuses on ten tenets organized under two main themes:

Protect Your Pets

- Spay & Neuter
- Keep Dogs Leashed
- Keep Cats Indoors
- License & Microchip
- Never Abandon

Keep Wildlife Wild

- Drive Carefully
- Secure Trash
- Maintain Distance
- Don't Feed
- Plant Natives

Take the Pledge!

A New National Wildlife Refuge on the Horizon

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has announced a proposal to establish a new national wildlife refuge and conservation area in central Florida – and they need to hear from YOU that this is a great idea! FWS is proposing a bold new way to conserve lands and waters in Florida and brings together a wide array of partners – from the State of Florida and U.S. Department of Agriculture to working farmers and ranchers, conservation organizations and even the U.S. Department of Defense. This collaborative partnership will protect habitat for endangered birds like the Everglades snail kite, crested caracara and Florida scrub jay but could also provide a haven for Florida Panthers – one of the most endangered animals in North America! There are two components of the proposal and both would only work with willing sellers and participants:

A new national wildlife refuge, the Everglades Headwaters NWR would encompass up to 50,000 acres of lands where hunting, fishing and wildlife observation would provide outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.

A Conservation Area would be created where up to 100,000 acres in conservation easements would be secured with willing ranchers and landowners. The easements would allow private landowners to retain ownership and live and work the land as they have for generations, such as raising cattle or crops, but would eliminate the possibility of future development on the land. Learn More: <http://refugenet.e-actionmax.com/takeaction.asp?aaid=5488>

How our Pets Affect Wildlife

KATE PERRY,
FWS BIOLOGICAL TECHNICIAN

Since 1970 the National Key Deer Wildlife Refuge has recorded 58 key deer deaths caused by free-roaming dogs. The most recent of these incidents was March 1st, 2011 in Port Pine Heights. Deer have been successful for thousands of years due to their natural tendency to choose flight over fight. This fact coupled with the dogs instinctive chase response creates many dangerous situations for both animals in addition to a direct attack on a deer, including darting into traffic, becoming entangled in fences, and falling into canals.



The Key deer is endangered mainly because of its limited and fragmented habitat, but humans can cause further harm to wildlife by altering their behavior through careless actions such as irresponsible pet ownership, unsecured garbage or illegal feeding. Intentional or unintentional, illegal feeding causes wildlife to congregate in unnaturally high numbers, increasing the risk of spreading communicable diseases and the likelihood of an injury from a loose pet,

Friends 2 Friends

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vehicle strike, and a whole array of other human caused dangers. “The privilege of living in this area with abundant wildlife comes with the responsibility to be a steward of it”, says Refuge Biologist Chad Anderson. We can be better stewards by keeping our cats indoors, controlling our dogs at all times, and taking every precaution to prevent our domestic birds, fish, and reptile pets from escaping. By being a responsible pet owner, we help keep our pets and wildlife safer.

According to 50 CFR 26.21(b) of the Federal Code of Regulations, “no unconfined domestic animal shall be permitted to roam at large”. If a pet is caught loose on refuge land, the owner could be fined \$50 per unleashed animal. If the pet harasses an endangered species such as a Key deer or Lower Keys marsh rabbit, it could be considered a class A misdemeanor and the owner could be fined up to \$1500. They could also be required to appear in court to address a federal judge, and repeat offenders could be arrested and face jail time.

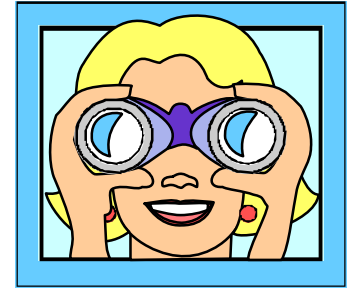
To report an offence call Refuge law enforcement officer Steve Berger at 304-9626. If you would like to report a sick or injured key deer, please call our 24 hour emergency number at (305) 304-9628.



*The Mission of FAVOR – Florida Keys
is to support the National Wildlife Refuges of the
Florida Keys through Education, Volunteerism,
Non-Adversarial Advocacy,
and Fundraising.*

Sightings from the Blue Hole

(UPDATED SEPT. 2, 2011)



OTHER BIRD SIGHTINGS THIS YEAR: (Some of these are seasonal!)

Magnificent Frigatebird
(Watch them swoop down and get a drink while flying)
White Crowned Pigeon,
Osprey,
Bald Eagle, Kingfisher,
Black-Crowned Night Heron,
Yellow-Crowned Night Heron,
Great Egret, Cattle Egret,
Great Blue Heron,
Great White Heron,
Swallow-tailed Kite,
Wood Stork,
Brown Pelicans, White Pelicans,
Roseate Spoonbill,
Anhinga Short-tailed Hawk,
Red-Shouldered Hawk,
Broad-winged Hawk,
Swainson's Hawk,
Peregrine Falcon,
Merlin Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk,
Sharp-Shinned Hawk,
Black Vulture (*very rare in the Keys*)
Common Yellowthroat
Cape May Warbler,
Sora Rail, Pied-Billed Grebe,
Common Moorhen,
Purple Gallinule, American Coot,
Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup,
Blue-winged Teal,
Common Merganser,
Eastern Kingbird, Gray Kingbird,
Catbird, Purple Martin,
Barn Swallow, Cardinal,
Red-winged Blackbird,
Common Grackle,
White-eyed Vireo,
Black-whiskered Vireo,
Common Nighthawk,
Antillean Nighthawk, Tree Swallow,
Barn Swallow, Purple Martin,
Veery Spotted Sandpiper
(seen 4/10/11 and several times after)

NORMAL SIGHTINGS:

1. **Alligators** - Our resident female gator is approx. 5.5' long and has been here for about 4 years. A male, approx. 7' long, showed up in early March 2010, as it was the beginning of mating season. They had been seen and heard doing their courtship displays, which include bellowing, swimming together, body rubs, and blowing bubbles. It was reported that they were seen mating in late April, 2010, but did not produce eggs last season. Another larger (9' plus) gator was relocated here by FWC in May of this year, and the female was courting both males, but evidently it was not successful again this year. More alligators could show up anytime, as we do have a population in the lower Keys...they come and go as they please. (American Crocodiles are also in the Keys, mainly in brackish or saltwater and are pretty rare. However, there was one 8' Croc that stayed in the Blue Hole for one week several years ago!)
2. **Green Herons** - These small herons are seen here year round, but especially in the spring, as they begin to build their nests at the Blue Hole. During non-breeding season, their legs are yellow, but in breeding season, the legs turn bright orange. They are great parents, as they build the nest together, then take turns sitting on the eggs and feeding their young.
3. **Key Deer** - There are approx. 500 Key deer on Big Pine and approx. 100 on No Name Key. The best time to see them is at first light in the morning, or an hour or so before the sun sets. Please don't entice them or feed them.
4. **Freshwater Fish** - Blue Gills (some people call them Brim or Perch), Gambusia (small mosquito fish which eat the mosquito larvae), Sailfin Mollies, Killifish, Sheepshead Minnow (a subspecies of Killifish), and possibly some exotic fish illegally released (Pacu and Oscar have been seen recently).
5. **Saltwater Fish** - Tarpon, Barracuda, Mangrove Snapper, Mojarra (Normally the Blue Hole has only freshwater fish, but Hurricane Wilma's storm surge on October 24, 2005, brought saltwater fish in, and now they are landlocked and mostly surviving. Tarpon are one of those fish which can survive in both saltwater and freshwater, but some of the other fish have amazed us that they are still surviving.)
6. **Freshwater Turtles** - Red-bellied, Peninsula Cooter, Red-eared Sliders, Yellow-bellied, and Florida Soft-shell turtles.
7. **Aquatic Snakes** - Mangrove Water snake, Ribbon snake
8. **Land Snakes** - Black snake, Corn snake, Rosy Rat snake, Ringneck snake (we do have Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes in the Keys, but have yet to encounter one at the Blue Hole)
9. **Turkey Vultures** - During the winter months, there are literally thousands of these in the Keys. Watch for them circling and not flapping their wings. They have weak chest muscles for gaining altitude, so Mother Nature has given them the instinct to be able to find the updrafts, or thermals. Watch for Bald Eagles and different kinds of hawks flying with them in these "kettles".
10. **Frogs** - Leopard frog and Cuban Tree frog
11. **Lizards** - Green anole, Cuban Brown anole, Bark anole, Green iguana
12. **Bats** - Free-tailed bats can be seen in the summer right at sunset, eating those pesky mosquitoes!

If you see any unusual sightings not listed here, please report them to the Key Deer Refuge visitor Center, located at the Winn Dixie Shopping Center on Big Pine Key. Phone number is 305-872-0774

Geo-What?

BY KATE PERRY, NKD BIOLOGICAL TECHNICIAN

In May of 2000, the United States government officially removed “selective availability” from the Global Positioning System satellites. This meant that civilian GPS units now possessed greater accuracy than previously permitted. Within days a GPS enthusiast hid a container in the backcountry of Oregon, posted the coordinates on the internet and told others to “go find it!” (Geocacher-U.com) Today, there are over 1.4 million geocaches hidden worldwide and more than 5 million people who seek them. The US and Germany lead the world in this activity, with the Czech Republic, Canada and the UK following.

The popularity of Geocaching has fathered many variations of the activity, including Letterboxing, Mysterycaching, and virtual versions like Earthcaching and Waymarking. Until recently, all forms of caching were prohibited on National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks, but with a few tweaks to the rules of placement, we can now make it compatible with federal policy. Here at the Lower Keys Wildlife Refuges Complex, only refuge personnel may create a cache location. Earthcaches can be anywhere that is open to the public (with respect to the sensitivity of the habitat) and Geocaches can only be hidden on established permanent structures like kiosks, gates, boardwalks, etc.

I have already set up an Earthcache at the Blue Hole, which is educational and focuses mainly on geography. The Blue Hole Cache describes the geological history of the Florida Keys, the differences in Miami and Key Largo Limestone and encourages participants to learn about the fresh water lens. Since its launch on January 31st of this year, we have had 22 cachers visit the Blue Hole from all over the US! With the help of Junior Girl Scout Troop 835, I am planning 12 more caching locations within the Lower Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex, from Boca Grande to Crocodile Lake. From this project the girls will earn 4 badges including one in collaboration with the USFWS called “Linking Girls with the Land”.

I believe that offering caching in the Lower Keys NWRs will reach out to a new audience that may have otherwise overlooked our tiny Refuge. I also believe that caching is a great tool to entice “techy” kids into the outdoors. With help from our wonderful volunteers at FAVOR, we can maintain this innovative outreach program to increase our visitor count and expand our educational audience.

For more information on Geocaching, or to get started yourself, visit www.geocaching.com



Pictures submitted by Cachers



What's new at the Bookstore

make life a lot easier for bookstore volunteers! Not to worry, complete training will be offered for technophobes.

Walk on Winn Dixie starts with the first Friday in November! This is a great way to meet your neighbors, have a sip of wine and check out our new inventory.

Remember the Key Deer Bookstore for your Holiday shopping! We have books, gifts and t-shirts and remember, all proceeds go to FAVOR to help with refuge efforts! We have also found that our wildlife inspired gifts sell really well at local events! If you want to be part of our first scheduled booth **Lower Keys Chamber “Art in a Natural Key”** Saturday, December 10th 10am-3pm. Volunteers are needed and appreciated! *Contact Carlene Edwards at 872-1473 or shetheboss@bellsouth.net*

Walk Talk

KAREN HILLIER

Nine enthusiastic 'early birds' took part in the monthly guided walk on National Key Deer Refuge this past March. The Friday walk 'migrates' to different trails each month to showcase the diversity of habitats and wildlife found on the refuge. The March walk took place on the trail located at the north end of Key Deer Blvd, and although the bird count was low (only 8 species seen), the insect activity and plants made up the difference for the day's walk. Also, this area was extremely dry due to the recent drought conditions being experienced in the Keys, which means more of the trail was accessible to the walkers -- without anyone's feet getting wet and muddy!

During the morning's walk, we were able to see an old charcoal site, where charcoal was made by settlers of Big Pine Key. The birds observed that day included: an osprey, several white-crowned

pigeons, a few great egrets, cardinals, an unidentified species of swallow (we didn't get a good look), and turkey vultures. Two bird species which we heard in the surrounding trees, but did not see, were several white eyed vireos and a red bellied woodpecker. Many plants were seen and identified along the trail. Two in particular stood out to the group. These were Maidenberry trees in fruit, and a very large Joewood tree found at the charcoal site.

Insects were abundant that morning, as well. Many pygmy eastern blue butterflies and fiery skippers were seen in the grassy areas, halloween dragonflies & a few other unidentified dragonflies were buzzing around, a crab spider and a silver argiope spider were seen on their webs. Last, but not least, a lone cricket was heard in the grass near the brackish lake at the north end of the trail. Folks that couldn't make the walk, but are interested in learning more are

encouraged to search for all of these plants and critters on the web to see great photos of what they look like, and learn more about the wild things in the Keys.

In April, the walk took place at Long Beach Trail. This area is unique in the Florida Keys because it is one place where you can see the ground level physical demarcation between the Miami oolite and fossilized coral which makes up the geology of the Keys. This trail is a great place to see unique beach plants, catch a glimpse of sea creatures, abundant shorebirds and a fantastic spot for butterflies! May's Walk was on No Name Key to get a peek into the hardwood hammock.

Guided Walks are being planned now for the winter season. Volunteers are always welcome to help with the walks and plant/animal identification. If you're interested, contact Karen at 872-2239 (x.226) to sign up.

National Wildlife Refuge Week a Great Turn Out

KAREN HILLIER

Two special events were held locally to showcase Keys wildlife and habitats in early October. "Thanks to many enthusiastic supporters in the local community, the 2011 celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week was a great success", said Refuge Manager, Anne Morkill. Despite the heavy rains on Saturday, the weather turned out to be absolutely gorgeous when the 17th Annual "The Big Sit!" was held on Big Pine Key, Sunday, October 9th. One hundred fifty people came to the Blue Hole to enjoy the outdoors that day, and were treated to a fantastic air show courtesy of numerous winged acrobats passing thru during the fall bird migration.



*Caught in the act. An osprey takes a drink from the Blue Hole while the crowd was watching.
Photo by Jan Loveland*

The Florida Keys are the final land formation in the United States where migrating birds from the eastern part of North America funnel through, before making the jump over the Gulf of Mexico for their winter grounds in the Caribbean, Central America and South America. The birds rest, eat, and get ready for the next big portion of their semi-annual journey through the western hemisphere.

Spotlight on the Species

Birth of a Key Deer

© TOM WILMERS MARCH 6, 2011

In late April, an unseen marvel is occurring on a balmy moonlit night on Big Pine Key. A Key deer fawn is emerging from its mother's womb. Nearly 7 months earlier, a weary 8-point buck -- scarred from scores of breeding-hierarchy battles -- had frantically chased this doe. Fueled by an overriding biological imperative as strong as the tides, its lungs burning and muscles aching from this chase and the arduous pursuit of other does that night and the nights before, the exhausted buck passed on its genes for the last time. Next year a new monarch not ravaged by the tremendous cumulative wear and tear of the previous rutting season, would emerge.

Last year, her first as a breeder, the doe had proved her mettle by rearing a male fawn. With twins, the demands this year would be twice as great. Too, palatable forage had been reduced over winter by other deer, the rainy season had not yet arrived, and new plant growth was minimal.

The doe, her belly distended by the growing twins, had chosen the same cryptic birth site that last year offered safety and comfort. She lay down slowly and heavily as the contractions began. Vulnerable and now on full alert, her nose and ears scanned the woods for possible danger. Familiar sounds registered acutely: A raccoon sauntering through the dry woods, windblown leaves rustling on the forest floor, a nearby deer drinking at a waterhole, the distant sounds of a passing car and a barking dog.

The delivery of the fawns was swift but left the mother exhausted.

The newborn fawns, covered with amniotic fluid, floundered like fish on dry land. An hour later they lay dry at their mother's side, their white-spotted coats smooth and sleek.

Instinctively the doe had licked her babies from head to toe to remove odorous afterbirth fluids that could attract predators. Mother and offspring were now bonded by their unique scents, as individual as human fingerprints. She would nurse only her fawns.

Tonight the fawns' movements would cover mere inches as they nursed and slept. At sunrise, their mother would forage, taking great care to leave them hidden. Until her return, the fawns would lay flat on the ground with outstretched necks -- as quiet and motionless as a stuffed toy animal -- their view unidirectional and one dimensional, as if the woods were a painting. As they waited, sounds and scents continuously flooded their senses -- nature's radar.

Like other mammals, for the first few days after birth the doe produced a special thick and sticky milk (colostrum), distilled by thousands of years of evolution into a miracle liquid that contains a high concentration of proteins, vitamins, and antibodies, as well as the vital bacteria needed for digestion. No man-made concoction can confer the collective benefits of colostrum to a newborn mammal.

By dint of hard work and an almost inch-by-inch knowledge of her surroundings, the doe found sufficient forage and fresh water to



keep both fawns well nourished. Fed colostrum multiple times a day, the fawns grew rapidly. They learned quickly to recognize the approach of their mother, either by her muted call or the waft of her scent alone.

Now a week old, the well fed fawns were nearly 50% heavier than at birth. Days earlier, their mother had cautiously led them to a new bedding site and they had since slept at several others. Already they had stumbled over pine cones, grown accustomed to the sounds of drumming woodpeckers, the scent of unfamiliar deer they could smell but not see, and the rhythm of day and night. Their routine was largely the same: suckle, sleep, and remain hidden.

The passing weeks were eventful. The fawns had tasted their first flowers and leaves, but preferred and still required their mother's milk. By month's end, they were agile and frisky, their legs sure and stable even on the bare limestone in the pine rockland. Now capable of short, rapid bursts of speed and evasive maneuvers, they were miniature thoroughbreds, marvels of locomotion. In the company of their mother, they

Continued on page 8

Birth of a Key deer Continued from page 7

visited nearby water holes and favored foraging areas, been sniffed by other does, been nose to nose and cavorted with other fawns. Their days were now spent traveling with their mother -- their lives a daily primer on the skills needed for independence and survival.

Though natural predators in their island home were limited to a few alligators, in the years ahead the fawns would face challenges as stringent as a deer in the Montana wilderness. Their range, dissected by roads, canals, and fences, was a dangerous maze in which collisions with cars, drowning and entanglement would be ever present threats. Free-roaming dogs would menace them. A prolonged drought or a severe hurricane might well test them as it had ancestral Key deer over the many centuries.

That long ago a deer would become separated from its mainland counterparts, evolve into a unique subspecies, and thrive on small subtropical islands is truly remarkable. Next month a new generation of fawns will create magic in lower Keys woodlands. We are incredibly lucky to have them in our midst. Drive carefully.

Geology and Key Deer Distribution

The wondrous Florida Keys were formed when the Wisconsin glacier melted and water levels rose, creating a 120-mile archipelago separated from the Florida mainland. That the Key deer persisted only in the lower Florida Keys is essentially a result of geology, elevation, fresh water, and habitat diversity.

The surface rock on all but 90-miles of the Florida Keys is the porous Key Largo limestone. On the extreme eastern tip of Big Pine, the last vestige of Key Largo limestone is overlain throughout the lower

Trash Kills Key Deer

A Common Threat to the Key Deer

KATE PERRY

Human litter is very dangerous to the Key Deer, in fact, one of the most common injuries we see are caused by deer stepping on various types of rings, such as plastic soda and milk bottle rings and metal rings, such as this metal key ring which was recently removed from a fawn by Refuge personnel. As the deer grows, the object becomes imbedded into the skin, causing pain, swelling, and infection. Sadly, some deer die from these types of injuries, like a buck who became entangled in fishing line, and another that was strangled by a clothes line. Fortunately, for this little one (pictured) we were able to rehabilitate him. His injury was treated and he was given antibiotics and released after a week.

It is important to be aware of the impacts that we have on the wildlife we share this environment with. We can discourage Key Deer and other animals from getting into our garbage by securing trash can lids with bungee cords and other responsible practices. Please remember to never litter, and that the feeding of wildlife, intentional or not, attracts them to an unnatural setting, putting them in harm's way.

If you would like to report a sick or injured Key Deer, please call the emergency Key Deer Hotline at 305-304-9628.



Florida Keys by non porous Miami oolite limestone. An impermeable limestone, it hold fresh water in natural basins above tidal reach. The handful of islands most important to deer contain a subsurface fresh water lens, underlain by Miami oolite, in which a layer of fresh water floats in suspension above the denser salt

water. This enabled the growth of the salt intolerant pine rocklands, a globally imperiled habitat critical to deer and a variety of other imperiled wildlife species. Of the 25 islands used year-round or seasonally by Key deer, only five contain a pine rockland.



In Memoriam

Harold Nugent

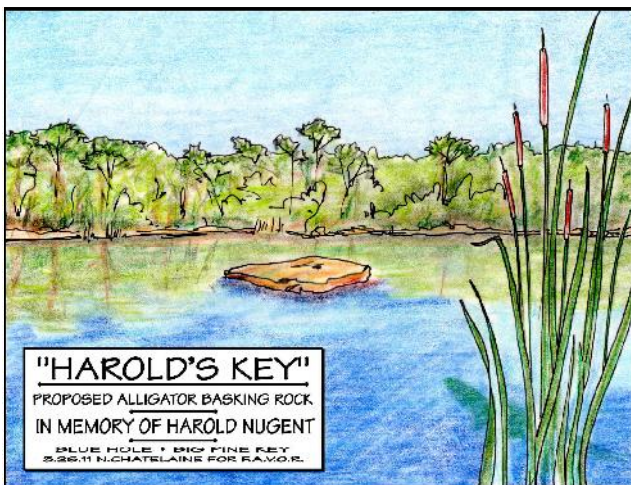
NANCY CHATELAINE

Harold Nugent Passed away last fall. He was instrumental in starting FAVOR Florida Keys and touched many, many people. This past spring FAVOR hosted a memorial service at the Blue Hole. His lovely wife, Susan who is very much alive, came to Big Pine Key with daughter Erin to attend a celebration of Harold's life. It was truly a celebration of life — not just Harold's it seemed, but life in general. I hadn't had the chance to meet Harold until that night at the sunset celebration, but as so many people spoke of their experiences with Harold, his intelligence, wisdom and his sense of humor, I felt as if I had always known him.



Refuge Manager Anne Morkill shared an article that Harold had written years ago about wildlife and personal totems. As if to punctuate that article, the resident alligator bellowed in approval — or was it romance? It was immediately agreed by all in attendance that the resident alligator should be named Harold — in perpetuity.

Alison Higgins shared this touching comment: "The best volunteer I have ever known I met when I moved to the keys 13 years ago. He embraced lifelong learning and had an infectious desire to share what he had learned. He followed his heart to protect natural areas in every area he lived. He was a gifted storyteller with a penchant for mischievous humor. Harold Nugent passed on October 14th 2010. He was my mentor and my friend. He founded, energized and led the organization that we all now volunteer for. He was awarded Volunteer of the Year for the Refuge system in 1999. He is one of the reasons I do what I do and I am who I am. Rest in Peace Harold. You are incredibly missed.



Karen Hillier and Kristie Killam set up the party



Susan Nugent, and daughter Erin flanked by friends



Anne Morkill shares memories of Harold Nugent



Earl Patric shares a story.

Left: An Artist's rendering of "Harold's Key", a permanent basking rock at the Blue Hole, is being planned as a memorial to honor Harold. If you would like to participate or make a contribution, contact Alison Higgins at 305-923-1783 or Alison@favorfloridakeys.com

Volunteer Opportunities!

Visitor Center

Volunteer at the visitor center! We have morning and afternoon shifts, seven days a week. Be a part of your community and help direct visitors to the refuge areas to see the Florida Keys Wildlife. The center receives 20,000 visits a year. Located in the Big Pine Key WinnDixie shopping plaza near all your shopping needs.

Blue Hole

We have lots of opportunities for staffing the Blue Hole as the cool winter weather arrives. The Blue Hole receives 100,000 visits a year. Though most of the visits are during the winter, we still receive substantial numbers in the spring, summer and fall. It is fun to point out to visitors the alligator, nesting birds, explaining how salt water fish became residents and why there is fresh water on the island.

Walk on Winn Dixie

As our 'season' approaches, it's time to think about Walk on Winn Dixie. Do you like to visit with friends? The first Friday of every month the visitor center hosts neighbors and guests for wine, cheese, a little conversation, and prizes!

Event Booths

Do you have a little of the gift of gab? Do you like to sell gift and things for a good cause? Favor Volunteers are planning booths from the bookstore at all the upcoming events throughout the keys. This is a great way for Favor to earn money for our projects. Join us!

For more information, contact Jim Bell at the visitor center - 305-872-0774. james_bell@fws.gov

Big Sit Continued from page 6

In all, twenty-seven different species of birds were seen during The Big Sit! A few special highlights of the day were 137 Broad winged hawks circling over the Blue Hole at the same time, four Anhingas stayed at the observation deck for most of the day, an Ovenbird and a Magnificent Frigatebird were spotted, too.

National Wildlife Refuge Week wrapped up with a guided walk at the Long Beach trail on Friday, October 14. Participants learned about local wildlife, plants, and a virtual Earthcache located on Long Beach trail. This cache is part of a new, technology based form of environmental education that the refuge is using to help 'techies' learn about the great outdoors. Additional caches (both virtual sites and real containers) are located at different places on the refuge. All cachers, from novice to seasoned expert, are welcomed to come out and find them.

Additional fall guided walk dates are scheduled and the locations of these walks will vary so that they can take advantage of the seasonal changes in the lower Florida Keys. The next walks include exploring Ohio Key on November 18 and trekking the northern tip of Big Pine Key on December 30.

Anyone wanting to join these outdoor adventures should bring a hat, sunscreen, bug spray, comfortable walking shoes, water, binoculars or spotting scope, field guides, and dress appropriately for the



The Big Sit! participants check out local wildlife at the Blue Hole on Big Pine Key. Photo by Jan Loveland

weather. A limited supply of loaner gear will be available if participants don't have their own. So come on and join us, let's go outside!

Participants are asked to meet at the Refuge Visitor Center (Winn Dixie Shopping Plaza) on Big Pine Key and caravan to the walk site as a group. Call the Refuge Visitor Center at 305-872-0774 for more information.



Mmm, Peanut Butter! A young enthusiast makes a special bird feeder.

For the latest FAVOR info and events, visit us online at www.favorfloridakeys.org or friend us on facebook!

FAVORite People



Favor sponsored BBQ luncheon at the recent Sea Level Rise conference, Board Members Alison and Kristi, Carlene sells gifts from the bookstore.

FAVORite News

13th Annual Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival

September 21-25th Birders flocked from all over to celebrate the bird migration in the Florida Keys. Our key note speakers were Kenn and Kimberly Kauffman. Kenn is recognized as one of the world's most renowned bird expert, is a highly sought after public speaker as well as the author of a very popular nature field guide series, whose latest book Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding has just been released and is now available at the Key Deer Bookstore.

Kimberly Kaufman is the Executive Director of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory in Ohio and is an accomplished birder in her own right. Both Kaufmans spoke and gave guided walks during the festival.

Guided tours, photographic expeditions, and Environmental Fair and Children's activities, all in all, it was a very successful event all round. Plan to attend next fall—check out the website at keysbirdingfest.org or email at flkeysbirdfest@gmail.com

Jane Goodall, yes, *the* Jane Goodall visited Crocodile Lake NWR recently!

Green can be seen on the spot of the **Blue Hole** fire. Look for updates about community meetings.

Steve Klett, Crocodile Lake Refuge Manager, is retiring after 34 years with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Festivities are planned for Saturday, December 3, 2011. For info contact Karen Hillier 305-872-2239.

A recent **Beach Clean Up** was held at Long Beach early this fall as part of a National effort and volunteers collected at least two pickup trucks full of debris!

Retiring, too, is **Jim Bell**, a favorite fixture on Big Pine! Of course there will be a party — and roast! Put Saturday, December 17th on your Calendar

A new **FAVOR Membership** card was created this summer. Get one next time you're in the Visitor Center.



Volunteer of the Quarter

Special thanks go out to Refuge Volunteer, Ben Edwards, for his help with the guided walks since they were reinstated in the fall of 2010. Ben has provided expertise in plant and animal identification, as well as leading several walks throughout the past two years. Join Ben and staff for a walk during the upcoming season. You'll see a variety of wildlife, interesting native Keys plants, learn as you go and have a great time!



