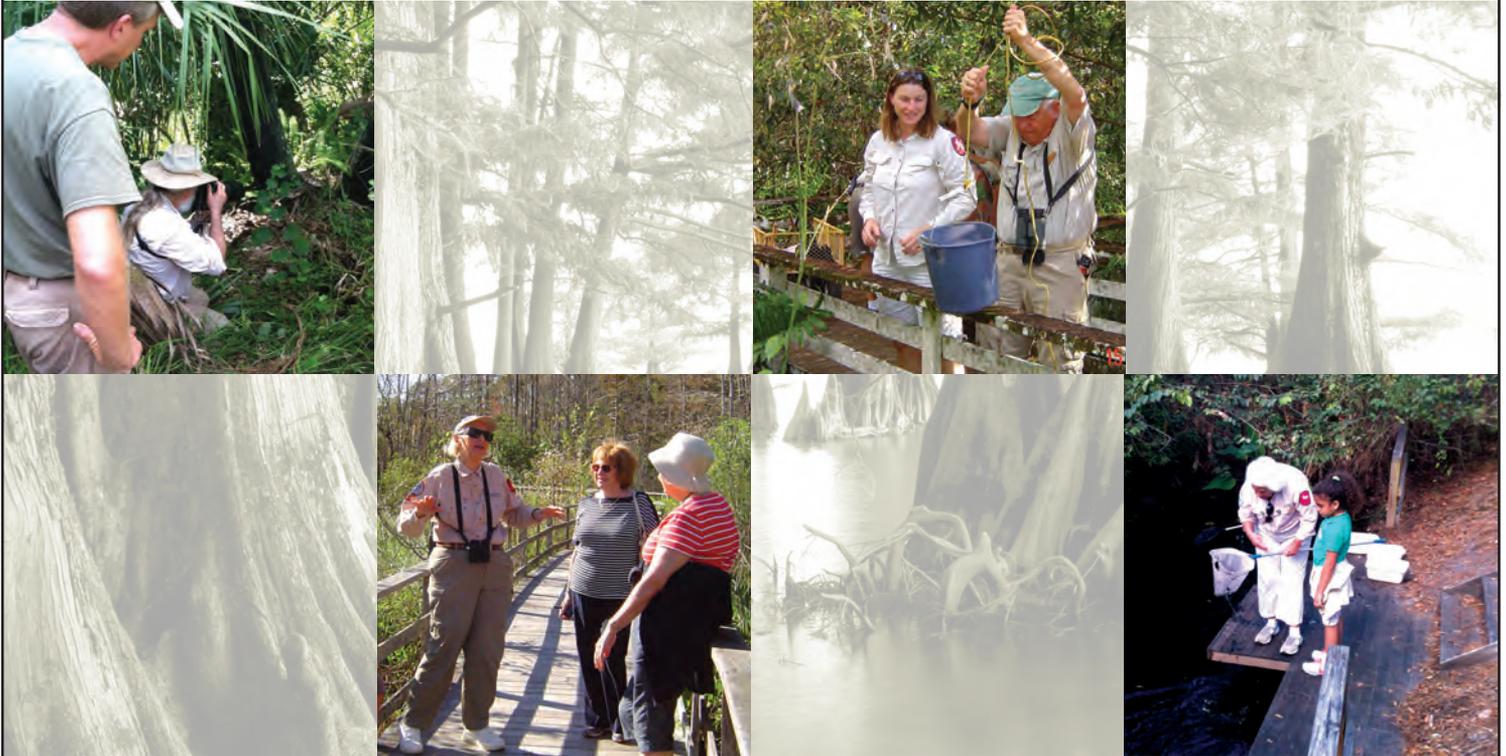




Audubon  
CORKSCREW  
SWAMP SANCTUARY



# Here's to the heroes who don't make the front page.



As longtime members of this community, we genuinely appreciate the volunteers who work tirelessly for the greater good of Collier County. That's why local volunteer groups are among the more than 500 nonprofit projects, programs and organizations we sponsor each year. Our shared concern for others is part of what connects us as a community. So please join us in supporting the vital work of Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

**We are proud to support Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.**



# WELCOME

## My Birds, Your Swamp



A sense of responsibility and ownership pervades Rhett Green's words uttered more than a century ago as he reflected on his role as an Audubon Warden, "No one's going to treat my birds that way!" For several years Rhett risked his life to protect the denizens of the Corkscrew Rookery from plume hunters. Rhett's attitude of ownership strikes a chord with me. It marks the difference between responsible stewardship of a natural treasure, or squandering it, intentionally or otherwise, leaving little behind for future generations.

The South Florida landscape is littered with a long history of good intentions whose aftermath has left us with a mess of an ecological legacy. Stabilizing and rehabilitating our natural system will require vision, strategic partnerships, commitment to sound science and education, and no small measure of time and money. Conservation is a team sport played by individuals drawn together by the common cause of conservation. Audubon is the expression of passion, concern and commitment of private individuals for the special places and creatures they know and care about; mixed, refined and harnessed by the professional staff of scientists, land stewards, educators and policy advocates. Our purpose is to protect, restore and sustain the health and vitality of our natural world.

It is my sincere hope that you come to see Corkscrew through the eyes of Rhett Green. After all, this is your swamp, and these are your birds.

Jason Lauritsen,  
Director, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary



## The Iconic Wood Stork

Corkscrew's wood stork populations are monitored by our science team under the direction of our research manager, Dr. Shawn Clem. The team reports a positive outlook on wood stork colonies in and around Corkscrew, and what the activity portends for the future of the population.

In the fall of 2015, storks began flocking to the Corkscrew neighborhood, with more than 200 roosting on the Panther Island Mitigation Bank expansion site, near newly reconstructed wetlands.

Other restoration, mitigation and preservation projects championed by Audubon are attracting wood storks and other wading birds for foraging. The presence of wading birds in the vicinity of these projects is evidence that supports the direction of our conservation efforts.

Historically, successful wood stork nesting season begins in November or December, following summer rains that inundate wetlands, providing fish and crayfish for storks and other wading birds.

But average conditions no longer inspire early nesting. And although wood storks may not have nested last year, it is encouraging to see them arrive in Southwest Florida early to forage in the footprints of newly restored wetlands.

Why is it so important that wood storks nest in South Florida?

Nesting wood storks and viable chick colonies indicate the health of our ecosystem. We need more shallow wetlands on the landscape. But having a viable, meaningful nesting population continues to be uncertain given the direction of climate change and its impact on rainfall patterns and sea level rises.

We must continue to safeguard wetlands known as "short-hydroperiod," which means that they are under water for less than six months out of the year. We will continue to direct mitigation and restoration efforts toward restoring shallow wetlands. Eventually, we will arrive at our destination: an ecosystem that supports wood stork nest initiation in December at Corkscrew.



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*Contributing photographers: Ralph Arwood, Shawn Clem, Dennis Goodman, Brian Hampton, Rich Kuntz, Jason Lauritsen, Debbie Lotter, Lori Piper, Sally Stein, Mac Stone, Waddy Thompson, Allyson Webb and R.J. Wiley.*

# Thank You

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Jason Lauritsen with John and Marty Howard, Co-Founders of Corkscrew's Cypress Council

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### A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

Stephanie Nelson for her considerable support of Audubon's efforts to see that key parcels of land are acquired for conservation.  
 Supporters of the "Sanctuary" Mural. This family portrait inspires visitors who wonder why we bother conserving land.

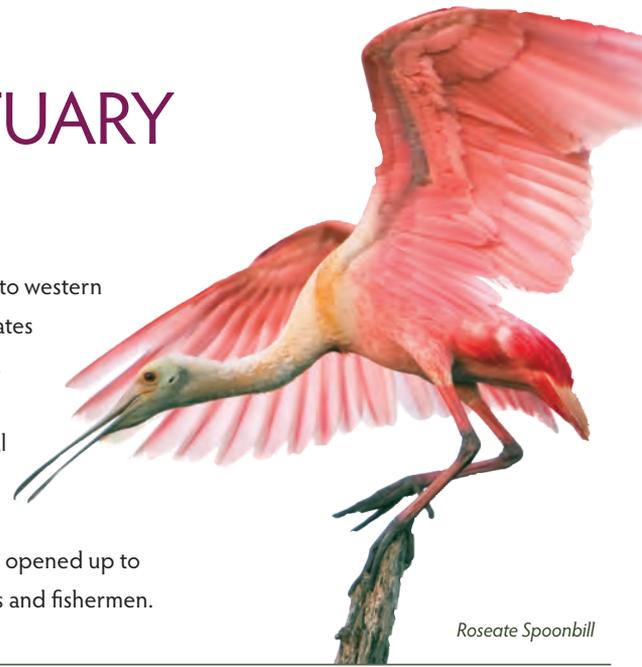


# THE HISTORY OF CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY

## Archaic America

No one knows exactly when the first people inhabited Corkscrew Swamp. From the swamp's genesis over 5000 years ago to 500 BC inhabitants of Florida were part of the Archaic culture. The Calusa developed from this group, emerging to dominate Southwest Florida until disease decimated them following the arrival of Europeans. Earthen mounds located on the periphery of the deepest forests and marshes suggest the Calusa thrived at Corkscrew. The Seminoles are recent arrivals from North Florida,

seeking escape from removal to western reservations by the United States government in the mid 1800s. They never surrendered and survive today without a formal treaty with the U.S. Driven deep into the Everglades, the South Florida frontier was opened up to pioneering cattlemen, farmers and fishermen.



Roseate Spoonbill

## Plume Hunters, Wardens & the Founding of Audubon

In the late 1800s, a lucrative profession was found in Corkscrew. The graceful plumes of egrets and other wading birds were sought by milliners around

the world to adorn women's hats. This fashion craze caused the plumes to become equal to their weight

in gold. Hunters destroyed entire breeding colonies.

The Audubon Society was formed by private citizens throughout the country who lobbied legislators to stop plume hunting. The Society also raised funds to pay local

residents to enforce the new laws and physically guard the nesting sites. Deputized by local law enforcement agencies and authorized to use deadly force if necessary, these Audubon wardens camped in the swamps during the nesting seasons.

Although armed and deputized, three wardens were murdered in the line of duty protecting wading birds. Guy Bradley in the Everglades, Columbus McLeod in Charlotte Harbor and Presley Reeves of coastal South Carolina were all killed while on guard. No one was ever convicted of their murders.

Warden Rhett Green protected the Corkscrew colonies from 1912 to 1917, when the plume hunting



Camp of Rhett Green, Warden of Corkscrew Rookery, Florida

finally stopped. Ornithologists of the time documented the immensity of the Corkscrew bird colonies while visiting Rhett Green at his camp. Wading on foot through the deep swamp, some experts estimated the colony to contain 100,000 wading birds. Many decimated colonies

recovered due to the successful campaign to stop their slaughter. This was just the beginning of Audubon's commitment to conservation of birds, land and wildlife in America and Corkscrew Swamp.



Snowy Egret

“The long and unremitting, but finally triumphant, struggle of the National Association of Audubon Societies for the rescue from extinction of the plume birds of Florida presents a record probably unparalleled in the annals of conservation in this or any other country. No organization has ever encountered more disappointments and more bitter discouragement in its efforts, and none has ever overcome them with more splendid success. It is an interesting and inspiring story of devotion to a worthy cause and of the power of grim determination.”

ROBERT W. WILLIAMS, HOWELL'S "FLORIDA BIRD LIFE," 1932.



RHETT GREEN  
*Landmark*  
**CYPRESS**  
NO. 7

Corkscrew's Landmark Cypress tree project was launched to commemorate the rescue of earth's largest remaining forest of old-growth bald cypress trees from logging. The project resulted in the naming of twelve old-growth cypress trees. The trees now serve as a living museum along the boardwalk for visitors to enjoy.

*The Rhett Green tree is an iconic, massive individual, rugged like its namesake. It has withstood the test of time. In 1912, Rhett Green was hired as an Audubon warden to protect plume bearing birds such as egrets, herons and roseate spoonbills nesting in "the Corkscrew," as Green called it. He camped in the pinelands during the breeding season, risking his life as he patrolled the swamp with his Winchester rifle. His commitment to protecting birds was plainly evident when he stated his opposition to plume hunting by saying: "No one is going to treat MY birds that way." More than 50 years ago, Hurricane Donna knocked the top 30 feet off both trunks of this tree. These became nurseries for a new and diverse generation of plants. The broken limbs resulted in cavities that capture rainwater, creating unique environments for wildlife. Draped at the base of this tree is a living strangler fig, with portions scaling the main trunk, producing tasty fruit to feed flocks of migratory birds that stop by each spring and fall.*

## Baker-Curry Landmark Cypress

The Baker-Curry tree is named for two individuals whose unlikely partnership saved Corkscrew and established it as an Audubon Sanctuary. John Baker, president of the National Audubon Society, led the effort to stop Lee Tidewater Cypress Company from logging Corkscrew's valuable bald cypress trees. The great value of cypress wood made Corkscrew the last remaining stand of these old growth trees on earth. Baker successfully petitioned the Lee Tidewater president, J. Arthur Curry, extolling the value of the swamp, negotiating its sale, and eventually winning an ally. Curry responded by making a present of a square mile of the most valuable stretch of old-growth forest. This partnership is a testimony that individuals can make a significant and lasting difference. We urge you to stay connected to special natural areas near your home, get involved, and help with stewardship and advocacy.



## BUILDING THE BOARDWALK & A VISITOR CENTER

### Building the Boardwalk



Corkscrew's second warden was Hank Bennett. He set up camp in the wilderness, and built a one-room cabin for himself. His instructions also included building a boardwalk. With help from locals familiar with the swamp and with excellent construction skills, work on Corkscrew's first boardwalk commenced. The boardwalk reached

"lettuce lake" by the end of 1955, and stretched into the forest the next year. A chickee hut at the beginning of the walk served as a gatehouse. By 1960, 10,000 visitors arrived.

### A Boardwalk for the Future



By 1994, with yearly attendance at 100,000 visitors, it was time to build a new facility. The project produced the Living Machine wastewater treatment system, an ecologically engineered parking lot, a 2.25-mile long boardwalk, and the spectacular Blair Audubon Center, named in honor of benefactor Dorothy Blair. Today, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary stands as a model for blending a world-class nature center with a unique and sensitive natural ecosystem.



# MUIR Landmark CYPRESS NO. 2

John Muir is called the father of America's national parks. He founded the Sierra Club, and was a proponent for protecting natural places for their innate value, and not just for the exclusive use by human beings.

He devoted most of his life to the preservation of western forests, stimulating activism among artists, scientists, writers and leaders from throughout the world. In 1903, he petitioned Congress to protect the Yosemite Valley as a national park, and soon thereafter President Theodore Roosevelt camped with Muir for three days. In 1906, Roosevelt signed the bill creating Yosemite and Mariposa Grove national parks.

The Muir tree is an old bald cypress measuring 15 feet around. Its ponderous branches host a variety of plants, including thick mats of resurrection ferns and scattered epiphytes. An equally massive network of roots sprawls out from the base, hidden from view but for the numerous knees that protrude from the peat. The purpose of knees is a mystery. They might stabilize the giant trees, or provide an oxygen exchange for their underwater systems.



## The Anatomy of a Bald Cypress

Bald Cypress is a deciduous conifer native of the southeastern United States.



### GHOST ORCHID

*Our "Super" Ghost is the forest's most famous plant and the largest ever discovered. It blooms in summer for an audience of ghost "hunters" from the world over.*



### LEAVES

*The needle-like leaves of the bald cypress are delicate and feathery in appearance. Bald cypress needles are spread out and distinct from the narrow compressed needles of the pond cypress. The bald cypress is a relative of the California redwood. Both have needles that fall in winter and grow in spring.*



### CROSS SECTION

*Sunlight, fire, lightning, rain and drought leave their distinct marks on each tree. This climatic history of the forest spanning centuries is recorded in the growth rings of these trees. Each story is as unique as the tree itself.*



### CAVITIES

*When hurricanes rage through the forest, or lightning strikes, they often create holes in the tree, where Carolina wrens, owls, bats, snakes and even bears find shelter.*



### KNEES

*Cone-shaped and slow-growing, the distinctive knees of cypress trees grow above the high watermark. Their purpose is a mystery. They might stabilize the giant trees, or provide oxygen to their underwater root systems.*

***"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."***

**- JOHN MUIR**

# A WALK IN THE FOREST



The Corkscrew experience begins at Blair Audubon Center, where exhibits, a nature store and a tearoom invite learning, relaxation and enjoyment. From the Center, the 2.25 mile boardwalk meanders through pine flatwoods, an open prairie, a strand of pond cypress, and finally into the ancient bald cypress forest, where hundreds of impressive giants tower more than 100 feet into the sky.

See the forest through the boardwalk's 12 Landmark Cypress trees. Linger and admire each tree's unique beauty, its silhouette adorned with vines, bromeliads or orchids, its boughs cradling diminutive hummingbird nests or a heron's

heap of twigs. Notice the arc of branches where hawks perch and migratory warblers rest after flights along the Atlantic flyway. Marvel at the massive trunk punctuated by cavities where owls, raccoons and the occasional bear burrow.

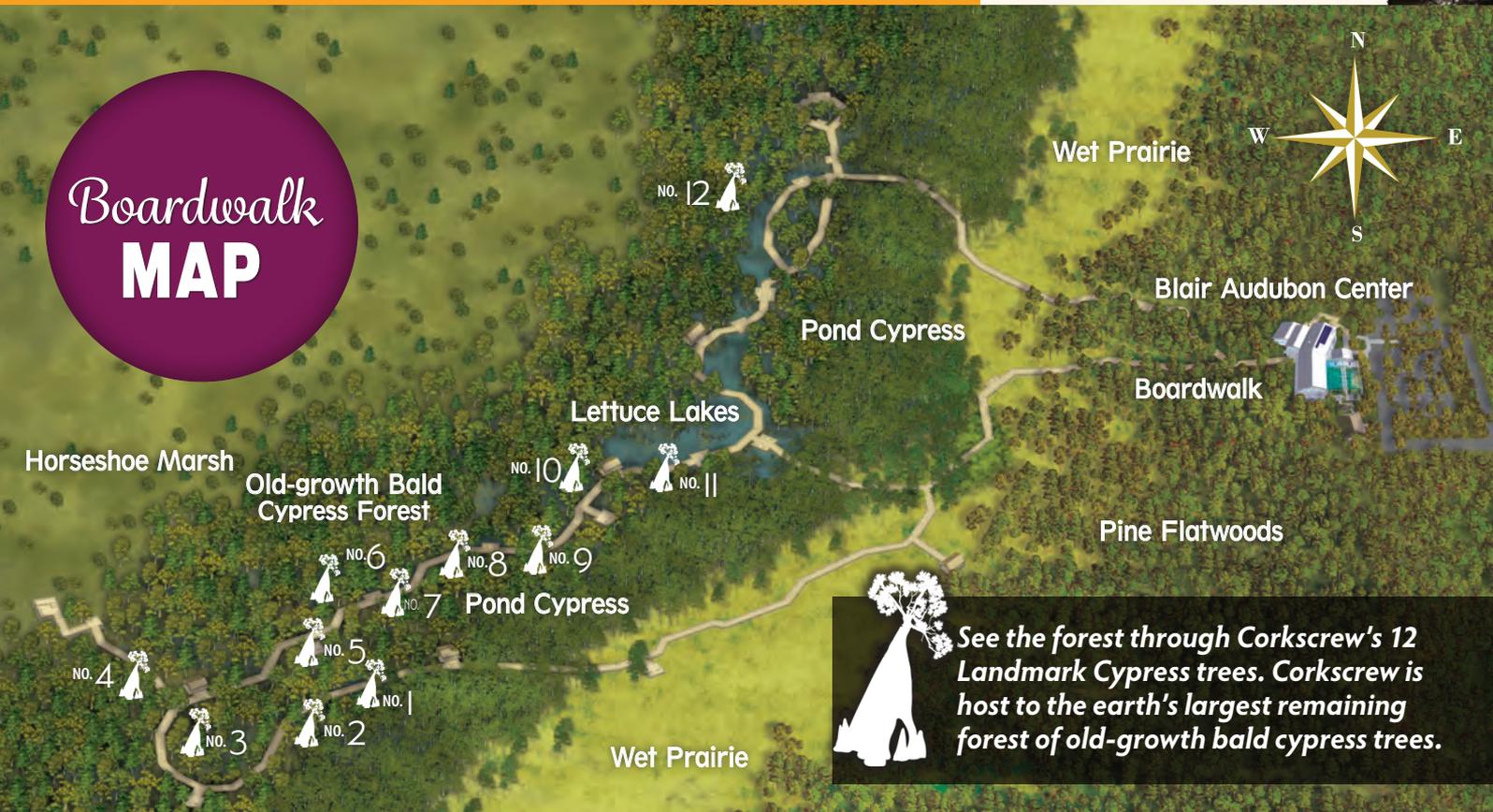
Learn about the trees' natural history and timeworn character over centuries of mild weather punctuated by climatic disturbance. Imagine the tree growing in stately slow motion before Europeans settled on the North American continent, and wonder that the tree remains, a monument in one of America's last great wildernesses. Understand the forest by truly seeing each Landmark Cypress.

## LETTUCE LAKES

Deep within the forest, stop by the wide "lettuce lakes," watery clearings that are favorite feeding grounds for wading birds and alligators. Pause at shelters and benches to view the theatric masterpiece of a forest at play, and for a dramatic change of scenery, at an overlook with a panoramic view of the broad Horseshoe Marsh. In the distance, beyond the boardwalk's reach, the forest continues.



American Alligator



# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

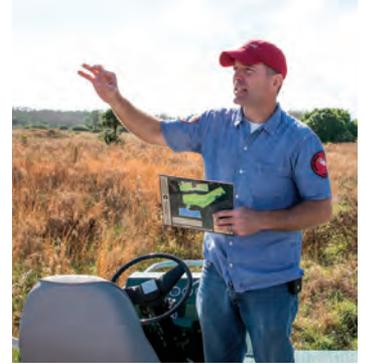
## Not Just Our Backyard

By Jason Lauritsen

Theodore Roosevelt stated, "It is not the critic who counts... but the one who is actually in the arena, the one who spends himself in a worthy cause." Safeguarding biodiversity for future generations is a worthy cause. To support life's diversity, renowned naturalist E.O. Wilson put forth a bold vision for conservation, challenging us with a goal of protecting half of the earth. His vision complements Audubon's mission. We need partnerships and novel solutions as we seek to protect wildlife corridors for our beloved panthers, ensure adequate foraging opportunity for wood storks, and work towards a resilient network of natural landscapes that sustain viable populations of diverse native species. This must be a team effort.

Audubon has a strong presence throughout the United States, with 467 chapters, 47 centers and 22 state offices. Audubon's strategic plan recognizes the ability of this broad network to affect change. The work underway at Corkscrew is part of Audubon's Everglades Program. Our science, habitat stewardship, education, and advocacy efforts are engaged here locally in the

Western Everglades region. This is our backyard, but the work we do here in each of these areas has implications well beyond our local and regional boundaries. Our team includes professionals working throughout the Everglades ecosystem, from its headwaters just south of Orlando to the outfall from Florida Bay to the Ten Thousand Islands.



We have a plan, and it involves you. Our backyard is connected to yours. The warbler that flits on the oak 10 meters from my window today will need a place to land tomorrow as it continues its 3,000 mile journey from breeding to wintering grounds and back. We need your support for our important work. We need you to get informed and inform others. We need you to get engaged, volunteer, join a chapter, become a financial supporter. We need you to understand the value of a healthy ecosystem on your quality of life. After all, these are your birds too.

## THE CASE FOR CORKSCREW

### "IMAGINE OUR FUTURE"

#### Imagine ...

*A cypress forest painted white with chicks.*

*Healthy wetlands dense with fish within foraging range of a parent bird's flight.*

*An endless supply of clean fresh water.*

*An international destination for visitors to explore Southwest Florida's most productive wetland ecosystem.*

*A center for science education where people come to understand how habitat management results in abundant wildlife.*

*A key wildlife corridor where panthers, bears and other wildlife explore the remnant parts of Florida's wilderness.*



Audubon's restoration of thousands of acres of habitat will bring back super colonies of wading birds and other wildlife. We will improve water quality both inland and on our coasts, and increase water storage and natural flood protection for people. By identifying and promoting better ways of protecting and rehabilitating wetlands through regulatory reform and land management techniques, we

can have a profound influence on Corkscrew and the Everglades ecosystem. Development has consumed more than 70 percent of the shallow

throughout the Everglades and has led to a 95 percent decline in wading bird populations, including the endangered wood stork. Nesting

wood storks are an indicator of wetland health.

Understanding the cause of their decline provides Audubon with insight on

how to recover Southwest Florida's wetlands. But with development pressures increasing, the time to act is now.

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT, THIS HOPEFUL VISION WILL BE REALIZED AND WILL BENEFIT FUTURE GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE.**

wetlands in the critical foraging zone around the Corkscrew wood stork colony. Loss of shallow wetlands in Southwest Florida are similar to losses

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## Meeting Southwest Florida's Conservation Challenges through Four Solid Planks



The four planks of Corkscrew's "Imagine Our Future" campaign –

**SCIENCE,**  
**RESTORATION & STEWARDSHIP,**  
**EDUCATION,**  
**AND ADVOCACY –**

provide a solid foundation for a hopeful vision of the future of Corkscrew ... and beyond.

### SCIENCE

## Guiding Our Restoration and Policy Work

Scientific data gathered from field research at Corkscrew guides our work and best practices. Audubon's research and science pedigree goes back more than 75 years in South Florida, with a continuous dataset on the work stork colony at Corkscrew dating to 1959. The collected research has helped prioritize, direct and refine our land management practices, restoration efforts and public policy advocacy. Through sound science, Audubon pioneers the development of vital regulatory reforms, monitors restoration efforts and successes, helps reform mitigation banking, and offers insight into the effectiveness of current regulatory practices.



## Monitoring Ecological Change from Land Use Around Corkscrew and at Restoration Sites

By Shawn Clem, Research Manager

Our science team continues to work to improve the science behind wetland restoration, particularly for short-hydroperiod wetlands. Our monitoring program provides data on hydrology, vegetation, aquatic fauna, herpetofauna, birds, and mammals in order to document changes with restoration and evaluate restoration alternatives. This year we completed or nearly completed pre-restoration data collection on Panther Island Mitigation Bank expansion and Wild Turkey Strand Preserve. These data will be used as a benchmark to evaluate and track the ecosystem post-restoration, allowing us to fine-tune wetland restoration (including mitigation) to maximize ecological benefits and to provide



recommendations for smaller-scale restoration on private lands.

This year we also made significant progress securing and analyzing Corkscrew's historic data, working toward a larger goal of understanding how and why the Sanctuary's ecology is changing. In addition to installing several new wells to better monitor hydrology, our team meticulously

worked through daily observations of water levels, rainfall, and wildlife collected since the late 1950s and entered them in a database, making them more accessible for analyses. While this effort continues, preliminary examination of water levels has demonstrated marked changes in hydrology in recent years, including a shorter period of inundation and faster spring dry-down, providing evidence of some of the large-scale ecological stressors in our region. We continue work to better understand and document these and other changes, to understand how they may be related to any changes in our wildlife, including our wood stork colony, and to use these data to better inform land-use decisions in our region and throughout the Western Everglades.



### Expanding the Sanctuary and Applying Hands-on Conservation Work

*Restoration and stewardship are the key strategies that keep wetland systems intact and reestablish water levels and plant communities. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary covers more than 13,000 acres of wetlands habitat. Some parts are pristine cypress forests, and others are drained farm fields in need of significant restoration. In today's altered landscape, Corkscrew's use of fire and its control of invasive species is essential to maintaining high functioning habitats. We also work with government agencies to conserve land within the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW). The parcels that we have identified for restoration are severely degraded. By bringing back the ecological functions of the land, we remake habitat for birds and many other species of wildlife that depend on wetlands and wild lands. In doing so, we enhance water supplies.*

### Connecting the Past to the Future

*By Allyson Webb, Resource Manager*

The fall morning sun breaks, soaking vital wood stork habitat in golden light as resource management crews emerge from dark shops. Volunteers use chainsaws and machetes to open trails for the prescribed fire season and to remove invasive vegetation. Swamp buggies trundle along, transporting equipment, staff, interns, and volunteers to areas of invasive infestation that degrade water quality for humans and animals. It's an ongoing battle, but there is hope for the environment; Corkscrew and its restoration is a symbol of this.

The wet prairie and pine flatwoods located north of the boardwalk reveal the benefits of Corkscrew's management practices. A prescribed fire was conducted here in February 2015 followed by treatment of invasive Brazilian pepper. This invasive, if left to its own devices, will rapidly grow and shade out natives, thereby decreasing biodiversity. The fire made treatment of remnant Brazilian pepper more efficient.

Within two weeks of the fire, new lush green growth was carpeting the forest floor, and white-tailed deer were seen in the adjacent wet prairie munching on palatable new grasses. Swallow-tailed kites soared along the edges,



snatching lizards and other prey. Multiple species of wildflowers emerged to sway in the breeze. These fire-adapted habitats thrive under these conditions, benefiting both humans and animals.

As water is brought back to the once fallow agricultural fields on Panther Island, wading birds come in droves. Roseate spoonbills walk in shallow pools of water, moving their heads back and forth rapidly, on the hunt for small fish and amphibians, their pink bodies a splash of brilliance. Wood storks, white ibis, great egrets, and more join them. Spooked by an approaching

deer, the mixed flock takes to the sky and disperses outward, searching other areas out.

These wading birds move about from place to place as water levels fluctuate and new foraging grounds become available. As restoration improves the habitat, wading birds congregate in previously unused areas. Perhaps you have seen a wood stork flying overhead in Georgia or northern Florida as they migrate southward. Maybe that same bird is now here, seeking the safety of our local national treasure, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.



### Welcoming Back the Wet Prairie

By Jason Lauritsen

The squat vehicle known as a Gyro-Trac might be one of the heroes in Corkscrew's wood stork rescue mission. It looks like a mini bulldozer, with a Mad Max-inspired spinning drum equipped with 22 steel teeth mounted to a massive steel cage.

In the Gyro-Trac, mechanics meets science and nature to create an essential tool in our work to bring back our wildlife by rehabilitating habitat.

Wading birds are on the decline. In the predevelopment era of Florida's Everglades, there were an estimated 2.5 million wading birds. That number has decreased by 95 percent. The culprit is loss of habitat caused by dredging and filling wetlands, primarily the shallow wetlands that are underwater fewer than six months out of the year. The lack of naturally occurring fire has further



degraded thousands of acres of remaining wetlands, resulting in an insidious invasion of



woody shrubs, especially willow, diminishing the diversity and productivity of the herbaceous wet prairies and marshes.

To reclaim lost wet prairie and marsh, Audubon has undertaken a three-year project thanks in large measure to the support of the Freed Family Foundation and the Rathmann Foundation. Our program has included traditional land management methods, including prescribed fire and herbicide application.

But the best results have come from the Gyro-Trac. It acts as a surrogate for fire by reducing the aboveground woody vegetation to mulch. This allows sunlight to stimulate germination in the diverse and viable seed bank lying dormant in

the soil.

After the Gyro-Trac clears a marsh or prairie grasses, sedges and native wildflowers spring up to reclaim lost ground. It has been heartening to see wading birds, ducks and deer return in good numbers to forage in the newly opened prairies and marshes.

Stabilizing our existing wildlife populations will require all the tools in our conservation tool box, from the costly re-creation of wetlands like the Panther Island Mitigation Bank, which has put new acres of wetlands on the map, to rehabilitation efforts using fire surrogates like the Gyro-Trac, to the vigilant maintenance of existing high quality wetlands.

### Mitigation Banking: An Important Part of the Conservation Solution

By Jason Lauritsen

Audubon has long advocated for change in mitigation banking practices. Representatives from mitigation banking operations have listened, nodded and politely declined our requests to shift their restoration targets to shallow wetlands. The reasons are economic: mitigation banking is a business and designing a project with greater risks can put the business at a competitive disadvantage, even if the ecological reasons for doing so are sound and admirable.

While the mitigation banking community acknowledges the need to replace lost plant and wildlife functions provided by wetlands, it's another matter to take on the risk of establishing these all too scarce communities. Audubon had no skin in the game.

The Panther Island Mitigation Bank expansion onto Audubon owned property

is a game changer. Audubon's decision to partner with the Bank means we have a seat at the table. The Bank's 497 acres of fallow agricultural fields were designed with shallow wetlands in mind.

Ground was broken last summer as the first agricultural field was prepped, contoured and planted to create what will become a diverse native wetland community, providing habitat for fish and invertebrates to feed wood storks and other wading birds. The Bank will help support what was once the largest wood stork colony in the nation, less than a mile from the Sanctuary's old-growth bald cypress forest.





### Building Generations of Conservation Voices

*Education of visitors, residents and students increases ecological literacy, broadens constituencies and diversifies support for conservation. Through Corkscrew's variety of communication programs and 170 volunteers, we take our conservation message to a wide audience, thereby advancing our goal of ecological literacy and increased citizen engagement. These constituents become advocates and supporters of our restoration and research efforts. The cycle continues.*

*Corkscrew's educational programs provide an outdoor classroom for elementary and university students. We pioneered an "educate the educator" program for teachers who help us serve 10,000 grade school students a year. Our unique partner-*

*ship with Florida Gulf Coast University, where every student is required to take a sustainability course that includes visits to Corkscrew, has resulted in more than 18,000 students visiting the Sanctuary.*

*Personal interaction with visitors through boardwalk and backcountry tours, monthly events and environmental exhibits and workshops tells Corkscrew's story. Volunteers are the foundation of visitor outreach as they communicate their special knowledge and immediate observations to tens of thousands of visitors every year.*

*Staff and volunteers, along with our science and policy experts, undertake ongoing outreach with stakeholders throughout Southwest Florida's public and private sectors.*

### Books, Bees and Cypress Trees

*By Debbie Lotter, Education Coordinator*

I can still remember the excitement I felt as my second-grade class boarded the school bus. We were going on our first field trip! Our class had been learning about insects and today we were going to see how bees made honey. My teacher, Mrs. Munz, was a beekeeper. She was taking us to her home to see the hives. I had never seen a backyard quite like hers before. Wooden walkways traversed through a beautiful garden with waterfalls and a koi pond. A bridge lead the way to the beehives in the back of the yard under a large oak tree. I could hear the hum of the hive as we got a little closer. A man waited there for us in his beekeeper suit. He showed us all the equipment used for harvesting the honey. Mrs. Munz had already broken off small pieces of honeycomb and put them in Dixie cups for each student to taste after the presentation. Before this trip, we had only read about bees in class. Experiencing the sight and sounds of the hive, the taste of honey, sticky fingers and the fragrant blooms of the garden, were lessons books could not teach. That trip was nearly forty years ago, and is forever ingrained in my memory. Perhaps it was that day so long ago that sparked my interest in insects and spiders.

Connecting students to nature and sharing the wonders of an ancient cypress forest and its inhabitants creates a new generation of conservation leaders. Thousands of students participated in Insect and Wild Florida Adventure this past year. The letters received from children describing their experience is validation that our programs are having an impact. The walls of my office are adorned with thank you notes, drawings and memories of children who will one day share stories of their adventure with their own kids. There is no greater feeling than when a student tells you "that was the best field trip ever!" I wish I could tell Mrs. Munz how much that second grade trip meant to me.



***"These people have learned not from books, but in the fields, in the woods, on the river bank. Their teachers have been the birds themselves, when they sang to them, the sun when it left a glow of crimson behind it at setting, the very trees, and wild herbs."***

—Anton Chekhov, "A Day in the Country"

### Environmental Laws and Programs Can Protect Habitat

Advocacy helps protect undeveloped land and maintain a legal framework of state and federal environmental laws. Our Everglades advocacy team works with government agencies to enforce state and federal laws that protect water and wildlife habitats. We also work with other conservation organizations to promote Everglades restoration and state and local land preservation programs. In the non-regulatory arena, we share knowledge and recommendations with public and private land management, land acquisition and conservation entities. In our advocacy work, we uncover opportunities to realize considerable conservation gains without additional costs. Our efforts strengthen our international conservation mission.



### Big Picture Advocacy: Changing “No Net Loss” into “All Net Gain”!

By Bradley Cornell, Southwest Florida Policy Associate

Corkscrew has been saved from the bulldozer and chain saw, but still faces threats from agricultural runoff, exotic plants and animals, and shortsighted rules and policies on wetlands, wildlife, development and restoring the Greater Everglades.

Prime among these threats is the notion that we only need to avoid a “net loss” in wetlands or other vital resources. Audubon maintains that with Florida’s human population quickly rising, and wildlife populations under siege, “net gain” is essential to bringing back wood storks to Corkscrew, Florida panthers beyond Corkscrew and Big Cypress Swamps, and wading birds to the Everglades. The “net gain” of water resources, wetlands and coastal habitat is essential to sustaining human communities in the face of climate change and sea level rise. Achieving this understanding in public policies will see improved wetland rules, public investment in land acquisition, management and restoration, and visionary balance between our human communities and Corkscrew Swamp.



#### Audubon has recently made significant progress on creating conservation “net gains.”

- Six hundred and nineteen acres of cypress slough and drained wetlands next to Corkscrew and CREW, newly slated for condos, were saved when Audubon mobilized vocal support for its purchase by Florida’s Florida Forever program. Florida’s governor came to Corkscrew to announce his commitment to the purchase, which was finalized in 2015.
- Audubon’s chapters and allies demonstrated big community support for the Lee County Conservation 20/20 Land Acquisition Program, rescuing the Program from a vocal attack on land buying, resulting in Commissioner support to negotiate the purchase of a 579-acre farm with great restoration potential.
- Collaboration with ranchers is a key Audubon policy. Audubon and its allies helped influence the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to commit to collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ranchers on expanding the breeding range of the Florida panther.
- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has responded positively to robust Audubon input on new rules to reduce wetland losses and enhance wetland gains for scarce habitats.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
CORKSCREW SWAMP  
SANCTUARY &  
BLAIR  
  
**Audubon**  
CENTER

375 Sanctuary Road  
Naples, Florida 34120



**OPEN DAILY 7 A.M. - 5:30 P.M.**

**Boardwalk entrance closes one hour  
before Sanctuary closing time.**

**ADMISSIONS:**

**Entrance fees cover two consecutive days of admission.**

**\$14 per adult. \$6 for college students with ID.**

**\$4 for children six to 18 years old.**

**Children under six are free.**

**\$10 for National Audubon Society members with card.**

**Located 15 miles east of I-75, exit 111**



**Audubon**  
**CORKSCREW**  
**SWAMP SANCTUARY**

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