



# Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 16 Number 3

Fall 2010



Rehabbed Pelicans are released.  
USFWS file photo

## Don't Underestimate America's Concern

It was July 14<sup>th</sup> - Day 87 of the Deepwater Horizon spill – and the oil had stopped, awaiting the relief well to permanently plug the hole in the Earth. It was a relief for Louisiana and other Gulf States. It was a relief for the nation. It was a relief for wildlife. But it was only a temporary relief. The long-term work continues.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill response is massive, covering about 460,000 square miles of ocean and 750 miles of shoreline, fought by more than 40,000 people from federal, state, local agencies; industry; and even academia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service alone deployed more than 525 people.

But the fight on behalf of wildlife is not over. What we don't know about the impacts of the oil spill is far more extensive than what we do know.

When will wildlife thrive again? What will be the long-term and short-term environmental impacts of a spill that pumped millions of gallons into the ocean? What will happen to the next generation of wildlife? Will some species' reproductive function be impaired?

This much we do know: hundreds of Service employees deployed to the Gulf worked long hours – through weekends and holidays – to ensure the best possible environmental outcome. And we know that Refuge Friends found innovative ways to create a silver lining in this nightmare.

The Friends of Balcones Canyonlands in Texas offered a \$10 donation to the National Wildlife Refuge Association's oil spill fund for every new member. The Refuge Association's oil spill fund is helping Friends groups that incurred extra expenses as staff deployed to the spill. The association's first grant went to the Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama to help them plant native vegetation on newly constructed berms that prevented oil from reaching critical habitat for the endangered Alabama beach mouse.

Our future challenges will be as great as those we've already faced during the 87 days of spewing oil. All of us face one, overarching challenge: to maintain the nation's sky-high interest in wildlife's health. Perhaps one of the most important lessons we've learned is not to underestimate America's concern for its natural resources. Thank you for all you do for national wildlife refuges.

*Excerpt from USFWS Friends Forward Newsletter by Greg Siekaniec,  
Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System*



Greg Siekaniec, Chief of  
the NWR System  
USFWS file Photo



## Call for Silent Auction Donations

MIWA is requesting donation items for our upcoming annual meeting fundraiser. With a sluggish economy, we need donations more than ever! Gift certificates, artwork, handmade items, and anything with a **nature theme** are needed. All donations are tax deductible and will be displayed with your name or company name. Please donate by Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. Contact Sandee Larsen at 321-861-2377 for additional information.

## President's Message

Greetings from the Merritt Island Wildlife Association! In spite of the relentless heat, visitations are relatively high compared to past summers. Because of this, bookstore sales are up. We certainly hope this continues into our busy season starting in November. As many of you are aware, there are two important meeting dates this fall. The first is September 1<sup>st</sup>. It is our annual Blue Sky meeting. It is at this function that the Refuge staff makes support requests for various projects throughout the year. This meeting is the very core of our existence. We will let you know what those requests are and their costs in the near future.

The other is our MIWA Annual Fundraising meeting, which I consider the "fun" meeting for all members. Between our guest speaker and the refuge staff, I am sure you will enjoy this informative function. It is also a fundraiser where silent auction items are placed on display for bidding. So please join us on October 13<sup>th</sup> for an enjoyable evening. The specifics for the meeting are on the last page of this Habi-Chat edition.

*Jim Pedersen, MIWA President*



MIWA President, Jim Pedersen  
Photo by Carol Pedersen



*The purpose of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.*

<b>President</b>	Jim Pedersen
<b>Vice President</b>	Dan Click
<b>Treasurer</b>	Jim Butts
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**Refuge Manager** Layne Hamilton **USFWS Liaison** Dorn Whitmore  
**NASA Liaison** Mario Busacca

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) is a nonprofit, cooperating association for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The *Habi-Chat* is published quarterly. For MIWA information, call **321-861-2377**.

**Newsletter Editor** Carol Pedersen **Technical Consultant** Cheri Ehrhardt

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

## Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors

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CNS Rangers, Leslie Peters & Michelle Woulard, NPS  
Photo by Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager

## Sea Turtle Walks - A Pleasant Surprise

MIWA held two "Member's Only" turtle walks this summer. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, 34 members attended a walk consisting of a presentation by Refuge Ranger, Nancy Corona, and a beach encounter by Canaveral National Seashore (CNS) Rangers, Leslie Peters and Ashley Steele. After an educational power point, CNS Rangers led members seaside to await a nesting loggerhead. The night was warm, but clear and pleasant and it wasn't long before rovers spotted a mother turtle nesting in the sand. All watched as she laid approximately 100 ping pong sized eggs, covered her nest and dragged her tired body back to the ocean. The young members covered the nest with a grate and named her Shelby.

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, 32 lucky members were treated to a presentation by CNS Ranger, Leslie Peters. Afterwards we all caravanned to the seashore to await a nesting turtle. The sky was clear and surprisingly

insect free! Our scout spotted a nesting loggerhead and off we marched to watch the miracle of nesting. Leslie answered questions and keep us informed on the nesting process and CNS Ranger, Michelle Woulard, assisted the crowd with red filtered flashlights (watch out for that hole!). After the mother turtle covered her nest, the children grated it and named her Shelby Star (Shelby is a very popular name this year!).

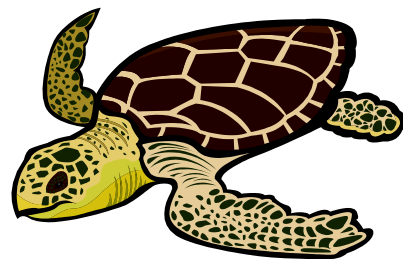
Thank you: Refuge & CNS Rangers, Nancy, Leslie, Michelle and Ashley, turtle scouts Jim Pilgrim and Tom & Diane Klen, and volunteers Bill Nunn & Jo Ann Heenan. Also, thanks to Mother Nature for a clear, breezy, un-buggy experience!

*Sea Turtle Stats: Loggerhead Sea Turtle.*

*The most common sea turtle in Florida, named after its large block like head.*

*Weighing an average of 275 lbs, they have shell about 3 feet long. Their powerful jaws are used to crush clams, crabs, & other armored animals. Female sea turtles appear to be weeping as they nest; these tears remove salt from the turtle's body.*

*Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager*



## Hatchlings

A special surprise was given to the turtle watch group on July 24<sup>th</sup> led by Leslie Peters and Michelle Woulard of CNS and assisted by Merritt Island NWR volunteer, Bill Nunn. It started as a normal turtle watch gathering, the first turtle spotted was a green sea turtle, but since it is an endangered species the group was not allowed to watch her lay her eggs. The wait continued. After 30 minutes another turtle was spotted. By the time everyone loaded up into their cars and drove to the ramp, the turtle had already laid her eggs and was covering her clutch.

All was not lost, it was time for the special surprise; NASA invited the turtle watch group to observe the release of baby turtles. The turtle eggs were dug up from the Gulf coast after 50 days of nesting and were incubated at NASA the last few days until they hatched. Although, it was the tragedy of the oil spill in the Gulf which brought the hatchlings to the Florida's coast, it was a very special and precious sight to watch these tiny loggerhead turtles run down the sandy beach into the ocean. It was as if the roar of the crashing waves was like a call from home leading the infant turtles to their destinies. They made quick work of their journey to the water's edge. It was surprising as the first wave washed over them they stayed in the sand continuing their expedition. After a few more waves they gave up the sand and swam off. Thanks to the full moon the view of them as they vanished into the surf was visible by all.

Approximately fifty loggerhead turtles were released that night from three coolers covered by black cloths. They were carried by NASA contractors to the beach. Each one was carefully placed in the sand, allowing it to make its way toward the ocean. This gave the hatchlings a chance to remember or "imprint" on the particular smell, chemical make-up, or magnetic location of the beach where they were released. The hope is the turtles will return to either Canaveral National Seashore or the Gulf coast of Florida once they reach sexual maturity. An immense effort was put forth to give these precious hatchlings a chance to survive.

*Kimberly Wendt, MIWA Bookery Sales Associate*



## MIWA Minute

Summer is almost over, and I am looking forward to some cool, dry air! The Center is quiet, the calm before the busy season storm. All visitor Center staff have taken time off to be with their families, and await the arrival of our cool weather visitors. We have plenty of great news.

MIWA was recognized by publisher, Houghton Mifflin as one of the top 20 nature themed book sellers in the **nation**. We are contenders with the big boys in retail: Borders, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon! Please, continue to purchase your guides from the Bookery, it has made a difference in our sales!

**Wal\*Mart** (Titusville store) generously donated \$500 for environmental education programs at the refuge. Thank you to Manager, **Mitch Day**, for supporting MIWA & the MINWR! We will make sure to use these funds for programs for area students.

MIWA has three new Life Members: **Joanne Napieralski**, **William Lathrop**, and **Juan Riera**. Joanne, from Titusville, has volunteered for numerous years at the Center. She is well known for her homemade cherry cake. William (also from Titusville) has been a MIWA Member for numerous years and is a true nature enthusiast. Juan, from Miami (my home town, GO Canes!) recently visited and has a new found love of the Refuge. Thanks to all of you, your support is appreciated! Thank you to all our life members.



*MIWA Pres., Jim Pedersen accepts donation at Wal\*Mart's Grand Reopening Ceremony  
Photo by Carol Pedersen*

Arlova Allen	George English	Fran Louwerse	Charles Schneider
Halifax River Audubon Society	Richard English	Marian Lunsford	Cynthia Schneider
Space Coast Audubon Society	Jim Escoffier	Barry Maness	Judge & Mrs. Joseph Schneider
David Bame	Valerie Fadok	Phyllis & Howard Mansfield	Robert Sieck
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Sam Beddingfield	Dennis & Kathleen Gasick	Forrest & Ruth McCartney	Sid & Carol Smith
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Drs. Edward & Pamela Drew	Darlene Koenig	Juan Riera	Maureen & Wayne Wright
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Cheri Ehrhardt-Topper	Daniel LeBlanc	Cary & Betty Salter	Thomas WYROBEK
Karl & Betty Eichhorn	Judith Lindquist	James Salyerds	
Lori & Steve Emly	Richard & Carol Loehr	Joseph Sanders	

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

**Sandee Larsen, MIWA Bookery Manager**





Count this Gulf Fritillary!  
Photo by Bill Nunn, Refuge Volunteer

## Refuge's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July NABA Butterfly Count

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 21 volunteers with MINWR Intern Allison Jevitt and Ranger Nancy Corona “flocked” the Refuge for a day of counting butterflies. The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) event is patterned after the Christmas Bird Count. This is the 35<sup>th</sup> year that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July count has been held nationwide. The local event can be scheduled for any day in the month of June or July.

Seasoned naturalists were teamed with novice butterfly watchers. The day was devoted to seeing as many butterflies as possible within a designated 15- mile circle. Our collected data contributes to a nationwide natural history database. The count provides data on species abundance through space and time. The collective information may provide answers and guide land

management practices with records for the listed questions.

Does species abundances change from year to year? Are population ranges shifting or declining? Are specific butterfly species declining? How does urbanization and climatic events affect populations?

One challenge for our 1<sup>st</sup> annual count included the identification of skippers, Hesperidae. This family of LBJs (little brown jobbers) may closely resemble each other especially when trying to identify them on the wing. However, it looks like we have the salt marsh, southern skipperling, checkered, fiery and whirlabout skippers down pat!

Many thanks for a successful count to our participants: Curt Arnold, Patricia Thomas-Arnold, Kathie Benson, Al Brayton, Nancy Corona, Paula Curry, Joanne Dykes, Marcy Dykes, Jim Escoffier, Nancy Escoffier, Tim Grogan, Cathy Hall, Jo Ann Heenan, Charlotte Henderson, Ron Henderson, Allison Jevitt, Fran Kaplan, Jean Lynn, Mike McGinnity, Terry Mott, Bill Nunn, Barbara Peterson, and Jim Stahl.

Please join us for our monthly butterfly activities. The MINWR is planning special NABA counts for the fall and spring. For more information call the MINWR Visitor's Center at 321-861-5601 or contact Barb Peterson directly at 321 799-2621 or by e-mail: [vioux@b.aol.com](mailto:vioux@b.aol.com). In addition to collecting data as citizen scientists, a benefit of the program is to encourage as many people as possible to get outside and enjoy butterflies.

*Butterfly Family Total Individuals: Papilionidae: Swallowtails=24, Pieridae: Whites and Sulphurs=134, Nymphalidae: Brushfoots=152, Lycaenidae: Gossamer Winged=7, Hesperidae: Skippers=153, Total individuals Identified=470, Total species Identified=35.*

**Barbara Peterson, Refuge Volunteer**



## Special Edition Duck Stamp Cachet Will Support Gulf Refuges

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has unveiled a special edition Federal Duck Stamp envelope, or cachet, that hunters, stamp collectors, and other conservationists can purchase for \$25 - or \$10 more than the cost of a regular Duck Stamp to help conservation efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. The funds will be used to acquire wetlands for inclusion in national wildlife refuges along the Gulf Coast.

The cachet features a silk rendering of an award-winning photograph of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Florida by David Moynahan and the 2010-2011 Federal Duck Stamp, which depicts an American Wigeon painted by artist Robert Bealle of Waldorf, Maryland.

All migratory bird hunters must buy a \$15 Federal Duck Stamp, formally known as the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, each year in addition to state licenses, stamps, and permits. Since 1934, Federal Duck Stamp sales have raised more than \$750 million to acquire and protect more than 5.3 million acres of wetlands, including habitat on hundreds of the more than 550 refuges.

The public can purchase the special edition Federal Duck Stamp cachet from Amplex Corporation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's distributor, by dialing 1-800-852-4897 or by visiting [www.duckstamp.com](http://www.duckstamp.com).

## Goodbye to...

Our seasonal interns:

- ....Allison Jevitt from Merritt Island, Florida
- ....Jessica Sosnicki from Virginia
- ....Gisselle Domiguez from LeHigh Acres, Florida
- ....Amanda Hoffmeyer from Michigan and
- ....Johanna Espenschied from Titusville, Florida

Thank you ladies, for your service and assistance to the Refuge and we wish you good luck in the future.

## Congratulations to...

..... the Southeast Tourism Society selected the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival as one of the Top 20 Events for January 2011. The Festival will receive additional extensive exposure in print media, web, television and radio in the U.S and Canada via over 800 newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, AAA guides, and other publications who receive the Top 20 Listings. Kudos to Neta Harris and crew!



Scrub Lupine, USFWS File Photo

## Lake Wales Ridge NWR CCP

Hooray, we've completed yet another Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge Complex! The Lake Wales Ridge NWR CCP should be final

this fall. For more information, contact Charlie Pelizza, Refuge Manager, 772-562-3909 x244. We appreciate your continued interest in future management of this Refuge.

## St. Johns NWR CCPP

The Refuge Complex has completed five CCPs so far, leaving only one to go - the St. Johns NWR CCP. We conducted public scoping during January, 2010, which included meeting with the public and with the governmental partners. The Refuge Complex is currently in the process of analyzing alternatives for future management of the Refuge and developing the Draft CCP. A Draft CCP for St. Johns NWR is expected to be available for public review and comment in spring 2011. For more information, contact Bill Miller, Planning Team Leader, at [St.JohnsCCP@fws.gov](mailto:St.JohnsCCP@fws.gov) or 561-715-0023 or Layne Hamilton, Project Leader/Refuge Manager at 321-861-0667. We appreciate your continued interest in future management of the refuge.



Blue Tail Mole Skink, Photo by Barry Mansell, Multi-species Recovery Plan, USFWS

**Bill Miller, USFWS Biologist**

## Speak up!

Government decisions determine the fate of the Merritt Island NWR. You can help by letting key decision makers know how you feel about the Refuge and other natural resource issues.

### President

*Barack Obama*  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
(202) 456-1111  
[President@WhiteHouse.gov](mailto:President@WhiteHouse.gov)

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director

*Sam D. Hamilton*  
1875 Century Boulevard Northeast, Suite 400  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-4000

### Secretary of the Interior

*Ken Salazar*  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
(202) 208-3100

### FL Senators

*George LeMieux*  
365 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-4041

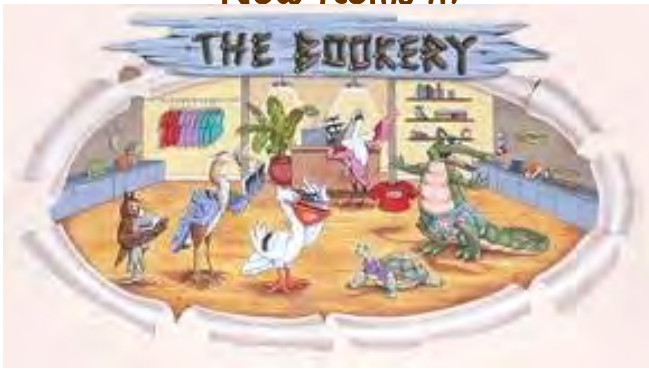
### *Bill Nelson*

716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-5274

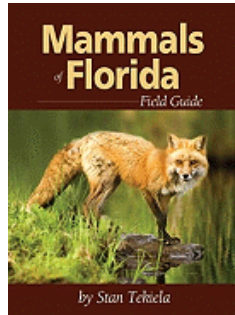
### FL Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/writerep>

*Suzanne M. Kosmas*  
Port Orange Office  
1000 City Center Circle  
Port Orange, FL 32129  
(386) 756-9903  
Washington, DC Office  
(202) 224-2706

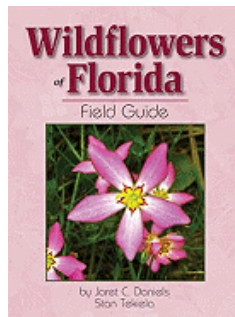
**New Items in**



**Mammals of Florida**  
 By Stan Tekiela.....\$14.95  
 Make all 77 of Florida's mammals identification simpler, more informative and productive. Track patterns, size details and scat photos. Stan Tekiela, is a naturalist and wildlife photographer.



**Wildflowers of Florida**  
 By Jaret C. Daniels and Stan Tekiela.....\$16.95  
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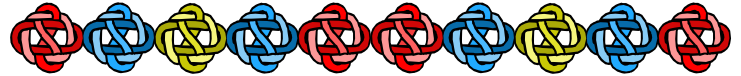
**For retail information, call the MIWA Office at 321-861-2377**

**Visitor Information Center Hours**

Monday through Friday  
 8:00 am – 4:30 pm  
 Saturday and Sunday\*  
 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

\*VIC is closed Sundays from April – October  
 The Refuge is open daily from sunrise – sunset, except during Shuttle Launch/Landing operations.

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



*A matching donation was received from*

**United Technologies Charitable Contribution Program**  
 via  
 UTC Employee & MIWA Member: **Eric Gardze**

*Matching donations & donations in remembrance of loved ones and friends can be sent to:*  
 MIWA, P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781



**Merritt Island Wildlife Association**

*Supporting the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge*  
 Joining is simple. Just fill out this form and mail it to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association at P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781 or join online at [www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org](http://www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org)

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- Patron** – \$1000
- Optional** – Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to MIWA. For credit card payments please call the MIWA office at:

**321-861-2377.**



*You're Invited to the  
Merritt Island Wildlife Association  
Annual Fundraising Meeting*



*Join us for an evening of fun while supporting the Refuge!*

*Sponsored by: Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts*

*Guest Speaker: Kevin Karlson, Author of "Shorebirds of N.A." will present "M.I. National Wildlife Refuge & Bird Migration"*

*When: Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

*Time: 6:00 p.m.*

*Where: Debus Conference Center at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex*

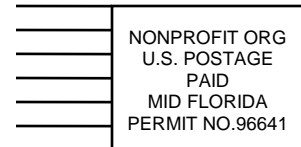
*Cost: Dinner tickets are \$25 each*

*Watch your mailbox for your invitation.  
Please RSVP by October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
via response card or phone at 321-861-2377.*

*Evenings Events:  
MIWA & Refuge Report  
MI Refuge Migration Program  
Silent Auction  
Cash Bar  
Dinner*



Merritt Island Wildlife Association  
P.O. Box 2683  
Titusville, FL 32781  
[www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org](http://www.MerrittIslandWildlifeAssociation.org)



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