



# The Habi-Chat

Fall 2017

News from the Merritt Island Wildlife Association, Friends of Merritt Island NWR

## About MIWA

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA), the non-profit friend's organization of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, was established in 1994 to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Refuge and provide assistance to Refuge programs.

[www.merrittislandwildlife.org](http://www.merrittislandwildlife.org)

## Silent Auction Donations

It's that time of year again...we are getting ready once more for the MIWA Annual Meeting & Silent Auction Fundraiser. This event generally raises over \$3,000 that goes to help support the Merritt Island NWR. As federal budgets get smaller and smaller each year, the additional support provided from donations plays a big role for Refuge programs, such as environmental education, volunteers and outreach.

This year's event is on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Debus Center at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. The keynote speaker will be Roz Foster of the North Brevard Historical Foundation. Roz will be speaking on the history of the area, including a look at the refuge. If you have yet to hear her speak, please make sure to join us for the evening!

An important part of the event is the Silent Auction Fundraiser. The auction helps raise a majority of the funds and we are in need of donations. Generally, we received donations of gift certificates, artwork, handmade items and anything with a nature theme. All donations are tax deductible and will be displayed with your name or company name. All proceeds from the event go to help support the Refuge.

Donations can be dropped off or mailed to the MIWA office at the MINWR Visitor Center. Please call the MIWA office at 321-861-2377 if you are interested in mailing donations! The deadline for donations is October 25<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, please contact Connie at the MIWA office at 321-861-2377.

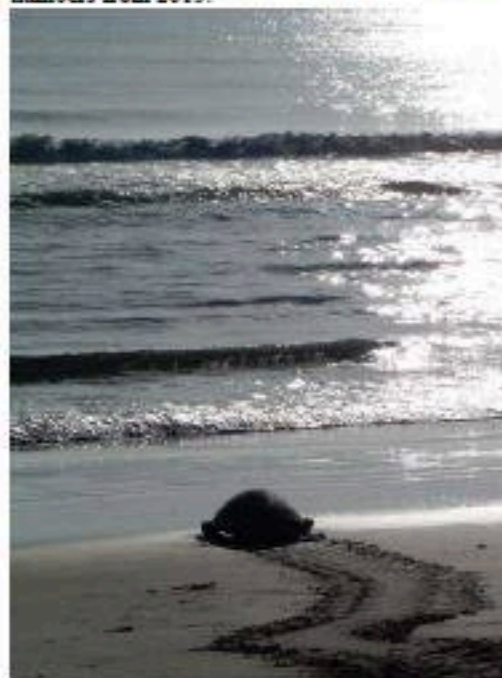
Thank you, we could not do this without you!

*Check out page 2 for more details and RSVP form for this year's event. We look forward to seeing you there!*



Hurricane Irma sent flood waters scouring over many of the Refuge levees. Early assessments indicate that at least 12 miles of levees are severely eroded. The Peacocks Pocket Levee was the hardest hit. It is closed to all access.

Good news though, this year was a record year for sea turtle nests on the Refuge! We counted 1,223 Loggerhead, 1,187 Green and 5 Leatherback sea turtles nesting on the beaches managed by the Refuge this summer besting the previous high numbers from 2015.



Refuge volunteer Roz Grimm helped to welcome over 2,000 students to the Refuge during the 2016-2017 school year, thanks to generous support from MIWA. Each year MIWA works to help fund Refuge programs, such as Environmental Education.

## MIWA Presidents Update

We want to thank all the volunteers and refuge association members who support the US National Wildlife Refuge System and the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. According to the 2016/2017 Refuge Annual Performance Plan the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is the 7th most visited refuge (1.5M in 2015) of the more than 560 refuges across the country. Our major activity is the continued support to the new Community Conservation Education Center (CCEC). MIWA has been asked to raise funds for the CCEC exhibits. Wilderness Graphics has been selected by the FWS to design, build and install the exhibits inside the CCEC. There is a 3-year major fund raising campaign (2016-2018) that includes the inside exhibits, nature store, outside playscape and guest Wi-Fi. MIWA supported the Fish and Wildlife Service in providing 25 presentations to City Councils, Chambers of Commerce, Churches, clubs and Titusville Live street events. These presentations are providing valuable information about Merritt Island NWR and the CCEC.

The ability to exhibit the past, present and future of the Refuge, partnerships with NASA, the National Park Service, local communities and to become the east end of the Florida Coast to Coast Bike trail will provide a unique opportunity for the Refuge. We appreciate the interest and enthusiasm that has been expressed about the Refuge, the CCEC and the exhibits. We welcome anyone who would like to make a donation or volunteer their time to this wonderful project. Contact us at [habichat@merrittislandwildlifeassociation.org](mailto:habichat@merrittislandwildlifeassociation.org) or via our website at [www.merrittislandwildlife.org](http://www.merrittislandwildlife.org)

Chris Fahey, MIWA President

## Exhibit L: "Our Past, Present, and Future"



We welcome anyone who would like to make a donation or volunteer their time to this wonderful project. Contact us at [habichat@merrittislandwildlifeassociation.org](mailto:habichat@merrittislandwildlifeassociation.org) or via our website at [www.merrittislandwildlife.org](http://www.merrittislandwildlife.org)

## 2017 Annual Meeting & Silent Auction Fundraiser

Please join us for our 2017 Annual Meeting and Silent Auction Fundraiser! This year's event will take place on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at the (newly remodeled) Debus Center, located in the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. Doors will open at 5pm and the event will go until 9pm. Tickets are \$30 per person and include dinner, silent auction and presentations from the MIWA President, Merritt Island NWR Refuge Manager and this year's keynote speaker, Roz Foster of the North Brevard Historical Foundation. Roz will be speaking on the history of the area, including a look at the Refuge!

Another highlight of the event is our Silent Auction. Donations so far this year include passes to Disney World theme parks, Sea World and Aquatica water park, specialty puppets from Folkmanis, unique art and prints, some fabulous books, MDNWR gear and much more.

Reservations may be made by mail, by phone or online. Please note, no tickets will be mailed, sent electronically or available for pickup. All tickets will be held at the front door of the event. To make a reservation by mail, please complete the form below and mail with payment (\$30 per person) to: MIWA PO BOX 2683 Titusville, FL 32781. Be sure to make all checks and money orders payable to MIWA.

Phone reservations may be made by calling our office at (321) 861-2377. Office hours are Monday thru Friday from 9am - 4pm EST. Online reservations are found at <https://squareup.com/store/MerrittIslandWildlife>.

Reservations must be placed by Monday, October 23, 2017. For more information or to place a reservation by phone, please call the MIWA office at (321) 861-2377. We look forward to seeing you at the event! As always, thank you for supporting the Merritt Island NWR.

## Merritt Island Wildlife Association 2017 Annual Meeting & Silent Auction Fundraiser

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(\$30 per person)

Sorry, I /we cannot attend, but kindly accept our donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment enclosed:    Check       Money Order       Visa       MC       Discover       American Express

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_       3-Digit Code: \_\_\_\_\_       Billing Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks and money orders payable to MIWA. All tickets will be held at the door. For questions call the MIWA office at 321-861-2377.



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

## Youth Leadership Council

Deadline October 10, 2017 for local high schoolers



**Know** a local high school junior or senior that loves federal lands or is interested in a related-career? Encourage them to soar to new heights and apply for our new Youth Leadership Council!

Nearby students will gain knowledge, skills and pride associated with local resources like Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Students will develop leadership skills to carry them forward in future academic and professional endeavors after high school graduation while encouraging peers through volunteer and outreach opportunities within their local wildlife refuge while earning a scholarship with Merritt Island Wildlife Association.

Local high school juniors and seniors can apply online at the link posted below or by emailing [Emily\\_DeLanzo@fws.gov](mailto:Emily_DeLanzo@fws.gov) or calling 321-861-0668. Deadline for all applications is October 10, 2017.

[https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSdNmBe4w\\_oyE69pID.../viewform](https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSdNmBe4w_oyE69pID.../viewform)

## Refuge Visitation Numbers Up Thanks to Better Reporting

Every August, as our fiscal year comes to an end, Refuge staff complete the Refuge Annual Performance Plan (RAP) for submission to Headquarters. This important report provides our leaders with a snapshot of what is happening in the field and gives them valuable data which they can share with interested stakeholders.

The visitor services division faced some challenges with serving our guests in 2016. An arson fire closed the Black Point Wildlife Drive during the busy season. NASA's closure of the Haulover Canal Bridge for some much needed repairs cut off access to the Manatee Observation Deck. Hurricane Matthew scoured and eroded the popular Biolab Road, keeping it closed for months. Several boat ramps were also closed for repairs.

So how is it that the Refuge's overall visitation increased to over 1.2 million visits making it one of the top ten most visited refuges in the Country? The increase can be partially attributed to improved reporting. Volunteers helped to install three new traffic counters to capture the number of visitors using boat ramps and smaller roads. Data is then collected from these counters on a monthly basis, giving us a better picture of the use at more remote areas on the Refuge. With the three new counters in place, we now have 10 counters tracking visitation across the Refuge.

Another area where reporting has increased has been the data received from commercial guide services. More local businesses than ever are now offering guided trips on the Refuge. These include fishing trips, kayak trips, bicycle tours and bus tours. This area showed the most change in the numbers reported to the RAP, with an increase of over 12%. Commercial operators purchase permits which require them to report visitation and use of Refuge facilities.

Working with our permittees, enables us to welcome more visitors to the Refuge to enjoy all types of wildlife and wildlife dependent recreation.

*Kim King-Wynn, Visitor Services Manager Merritt Island NWR*

## MINWR Volunteers Fundamental in Irma Clean Up

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge received significant damage from Hurricane Irma during September and was fortunate to be reopened for public use in some areas within a week of the storm. Refuge volunteers were instrumental in the cleanup and education of the local public through front desk work.

Eric Gardze along with new volunteer Braden Cunningham came in on the Friday of the storm week and removed fallen branches and leaf litter from the Visitor Center Boardwalk Trail and had it reopened for the general public quickly. Without their dedication on a humid, hot day, the opening of the visitor center trail would have been delayed.

The Saturday following the storm, volunteers including Braden Cunningham, Tim Harper, and Franklin Sumner cleaned various high use areas of the refuge. Braden removed the insulation that Irma pulled from under the visitor center from the front yard area. Tim cleaned and neatened the Sandler Education Outpost to prepare for coming school programs from refuge staff as well as the Brevard Zoo this fall. Franklin continued to remove debris and then worked with Braden to groom an area near refuge headquarters.

In addition - multiple volunteers including Kris Fisher and Sam Harrison pulled double desk duty shifts on Saturday immediately after reopening from Hurricane Irma. All of our front desk volunteers have helped safely

inform visitors of closures and offer quality experiences despite limitations from the storm itself. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have channeled their true volunteer spirit to give back to the refuge and their local community. Merritt Island NWR continues to grow stronger thanks to their assistance and dedication to continue to provide visitors their best possible experience in the face of adversity and inclement weather.

*Emily DeLanzo, Volunteer Coordinator and Education Specialist Merritt Island NWR*



Bairs Cove boatramp being evaluated after Hurricane Irma  
*Photo by MINWR Staff*



## Save the Date

**October 9 - 14**

*National Wildlife Refuge Week*  
Merritt Island NWR

**October 14**

*National Wildlife Refuge Week Event*  
10am - 2pm  
Merritt Island NWR Event

**October 21**

*2nd Annual Harvest Festival*  
10am - 3pm  
Enchanted Forest Nature Sanctuary

**October 27**

*MIWA Annual Meeting & Silent Auction*  
5pm - 9pm  
Debus Center, KSC Visitor Complex

**November 18**

*Museums of Brevard Alternative Gift Fair*  
10am - 3pm  
Veterans Memorial Center

**December 1 - February 28**

*"Flora & Fauna" exhibit*  
Brevard Watercolor Society,  
MINWR Visitor Center

**December 3**

*Brevard Watercolor Society Reception*  
4pm - 6pm  
MINWR Visitor Center

**January 24 - 29**

*Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival*  
[spacecoastbirdingandwildlife festival.org](http://spacecoastbirdingandwildlife festival.org)

**February 10**

*7th Annual Pioneer Day*  
Sam's House at Pine Island



## Coloring the Birds of Cuba

In our bookstore here at the Refuge there's a coloring book for sale that was produced by a local Audubon chapter. It's the English version of a book that was originally done in Spanish. Here's how that project began.

### Coloring The Birds of Cuba



In December, 2014 Halifax River Audubon in Daytona Beach planned a birding trip to Cuba. There was a \$200 per person donation to the chapter built into the cost of the trip. With one of those going having retired from a corporation with a generous matching grant program, we ended up with a donation of \$3,200. One afternoon, as we rode across Cuba in the comfort of our bus, Rachel Ramsey (HRA Treasurer at the time) suggested to me that HRA use that donation to fund a gift to Cuba's children. She suggested, "How about a coloring book of Cuban birds?"

A month or so after we got back I contacted Reimier Mungia, President of Lake Region Audubon Society, in Lakeland. I'd known him through another friend as a good photographer and his Cuban heritage and environmental commitment meant, in my mind, that he might know someone who could do the drawings and put the book together. It turned out that in addition to his photographic talents he's an excellent artist. Plus, as a native Spanish speaker, he was the perfect choice to do the book. The finished product is just what we had in mind.

This project could not have happened without the help and advice from Gary Markowski, of Caribbean Conservation Trust, and his contacts within the environmental and governmental communities in Cuba. If you think about it, it's understandable that a country that has been under embargo by the US for half a century might view with suspicion the idea that a bunch of "do gooders" from there want to distribute books to their school kids. Our donation covered the cost of printing 2,000 copies of the Spanish version. We have already seen nearly 1,000 copies taken down to Cuba for free distribution to kids there, along with crayons and colored pencils. Objects that can be difficult for the average Cuban to obtain. They went with groups like the Ohio Ornithological Society, Audubon chapters, kayak groups, native plant society members and a medical missions group headed by a pediatrician from Cincinnati.

Just after landing in Havana we saw Painted Buntings and Cuban Bullfinches in tiny cages on the front porches and balconies of Cuban homes as our bus drove along on the way to our first destination. The caged bird trade in Cuba is a serious threat to several endemic species there and kids are often the first link in the chain of this destructive practice. We hope these books will help to begin changing attitudes among the young and eventually lead to an end to the capture and caging of wild birds everywhere.

For more information on *Coloring the Birds of Cuba* or to make a purchase, please call the MIWA Bookery at 321-861-0669.

*David Hartgrove, MIWA and Halifax River Audubon Board member*



*Have you heard?*  
The Haulover Canal Bridge has reopened! Repairs have been completed and the bridge is once again open to traffic.

# ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR

NOV 18  
10 AM - 3 PM

Buy unique gifts for the holidays!  
Merchandise, memberships, and  
more from your favorite local  
nonprofits.

Veterans Memorial Park  
400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy,  
Merritt Island, FL 32952

Free  
Admission

## MOB Alternative Gift Fair

The Museums of Brevard (the MOB) will be hosting their first ever Alternative Gift Fair this November! The event offers shoppers a choice of holiday gifts to honor family and friends while supporting charities and non-profit organizations in a festive atmosphere. Local organizations and non-profits will be selling gifts that help others, help the earth, or celebrate our local history and culture such as hand-made crafts, toys, books, jewelry, clothing, artwork and other unique gift items, with 100% of the profits from the sales kept by these local organizations to help achieve their missions.

The gift fair will be held Saturday, November 18th from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Veterans Memorial Center at 400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy, Merritt Island, FL 32952.

MIWA will be attending, so be sure to stop by our booth and get something special for the holidays that will help support the Refuge! We will have assorted hats, t-shirts, gift certificates, memberships and other awesome gifts available.

For more information, please call the Refuge at (321) 861-0669.

## Thank You CCEC Donors

**Scrub Jay:** Al & Emma Jean McKinley, Dan & Diane Click, Andy & Rosemary Georganna, Warren & Betty Camp, Betty Pound, Charles & Ann Stewart, Tom & Lyn Altif, Dixie Kirsch Family Trust, Darleen & Jerry Hunt, Holbrook Travel, Daughters of the American Revolution Philip Perry Chapter, John & Cecilia Carey.  
**Pintail:** Delaware North Parks & Resorts, Space Coast Audubon, Cox Conserves Heroes Award.  
**Ibis:** McCartney Memorial Fund, Chris Fairey, Kayak's by Bo.  
**Pelican:** Laurilee Thompson, Don & Janet Craig, The Paul B. Hunter & Constance D. Hunter Charitable Foundation, Inc.

## Stalking the Mocking (Bird)

The first week in August brought joy to local, and not so local birders, as a Bahama Mockingbird or "BAMO" as bird nerds like to say, was sighted and ID-ed at Canaveral National Seashore.

Audubon's website says of this bird,

"A localized resident of the Bahamas and a few other islands in the western Caribbean, this hefty mockingbird has strayed to southern Florida on a number of occasions since the early 1970's. One male returned for several springs to Key West, where it may have interbred with the local Northern Mockingbirds."

In other words, this is a bird that is not supposed to be found along the Central Florida Coast! Word of this rare bird's appearance spread throughout Florida and beyond.

It appears that it was first reported in the American Birding Associations Rare Bird Sightings log by Mitchell Harris, but I could not find his post. I did find an excerpt from the eBird profile of eBird member, Sheri Brown on August 7, 2017:

"Brown mockingbird larger than Northern Mockingbird. No white in wings. Was very active and cooperative, would sit in the open at close range. Possible NOMA x BAMO hybrid associating with it. At one point both birds flew to the ground beside the road for a minute before flying back to the cover of the sea grapes and surrounding shrubs/trees."

I was one of many MINWR volunteers who stalked the BAMO at Canaveral National Seashore and I took a few photos of it at the curve in the beach roads just before parking lot #1. Also there admiring the BAMO with me were a young Gainesville woman and a man who had travelled all the way from South Carolina to see this bird!

*Kate Perez, MINWR Volunteer and Bird Nerd*



Bahama Mockingbird (BAMO)  
Photo by Kate Perez

*Interested in birding on the refuge but not sure where to start? Join one of our Refuge tours! A knowledgeable Refuge volunteer will take you on a two-hour guide tour in our Refuge Shuttle bus. This is a great way to learn to identify birds, plants and wildlife! For those who are already knowledgeable these tours also offer chance to see unusual or rare birds and wildlife. Space is limited so please call (321) 861-0669 for reservations. Fee \$5 per person, \$2.50 for senior or access pass holders.*

## One Butterfly, Two butterflies, three...

The Refuge is in need of volunteers to help with our Butterfly Survey program. Volunteers meet once a month (generally on the first Saturday) in the MINWR Visitor Center auditorium. The program begins with a photo presentation on learning how to identify butterflies. Afterwards, everyone participates in a butterfly survey to collect data for the North American Butterfly Count and Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network. The survey takes place over different locations on the Refuge and volunteers meet back at the Visitor Center in the afternoon to turn in their data. Be sure to bring water, snacks, insect repellent and wear closed shoes and long pants. For more information, please call the refuge at 321-861-0669. The next survey is scheduled for Saturday Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> at 9am.



Gulf fritillary, *Agraulis vanillae* (Linnaeus) caterpillar. Photo by Nathan Johnson

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

# REFUGE WEEK

October 7-14, 2017

In an effort to help people across the country find their way to national wildlife refuges, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge will be offering new programs to help encourage people from all backgrounds to be inspired by their federal lands within this agency.

As a part of this year's celebration for the National Wildlife Refuge System, MINWR will be offering exciting new programming. Some of these new Refuge adventure will include a Bring-Your-Own-Kayak volunteer-led tour, guided birding hikes, stand-up paddle board yoga, and more!

In addition, live animals and exhibitors will be at the refuge visitor center on Saturday, October 14, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to educate and inspire visitors to promote wildlife conservation.

If you'd like to be a vendor or participate as a volunteer, please contact Emily DeLanzo at [Emily\\_DeLanzo@fws.gov](mailto:Emily_DeLanzo@fws.gov) or (321)861-0668.

*Emily DeLanzo, MINWR Volunteer Coordinator and Education Specialist*

## Revising Compatibility Determinations for Eight 10-year Uses at MINWR

All public uses of national wildlife refuges must be regularly reviewed and approved for both appropriateness and compatibility. The Service is currently revising compatibility determinations for eight 10-year uses on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR): Bicycling, Research, Astronomy, Organized group camping, Commercial services, Noncommercial plant collection, Feral hog control and Forest management-commercial timber harvest

These uses were last evaluated in the 2008 Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Merritt Island NWR. Draft compatibility determinations would be expected to be available for public review and comment in late 2017 / early 2018. For more information, contact Kim King-Wrenn, Supervisory Park Ranger at 321-861-0669.

*Cheri M. Ehrhardt, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



Like our new look? MIWA worked on getting the Refuge Shuttle bus wrapped this summer. The bus went from plain to amazing thanks to beautiful photos from around the Refuge and the local graphics company Fish Skinz ([www.fishskinz.com](http://www.fishskinz.com)). What a wonderful job they did! Thank you also to MIWA board member Tom Altif for helping us complete this project. Be sure to sign up for one of the Refuge's Nature Bus Tours this fall. Tours are from 9am to noon on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Space is limited so please call (321) 861-0669 for reservations. Fees are \$5 per person, \$2.50 for senior or access pass holders.

### Thank You to our MIWA Members

**Gopher Tortoise:** Carl S. Boyer & Blacks Service Spray, John & Pam Boderocco, Joseph Byron, Dr. John Jardine & Dr. Diane Daddario, Diane Jackson & Alfred Dirska, Carla & Gary Furr, David & Karen Hilquist, Jalna Jaeger, Jay & Tanya Knappman, Paula & Daniel Mclellan, Teri Monteith, Kate & Tom Perez, Donna Poole, Jimmy Rudolph, Christine & Mark Shireman, Psi Zeta Zeta Chapter, Richard George, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Titusville, Els. H. Van Engelenburgs. **Bobcat:** Jay & Peggy Honeycutt, Frances Louwerse, David Splitt, Laurilee Thompson, Janet & Bill Forster. **Sea Turtle:** Nedra Sekera, Bob Sieck, Kenneth & Mary Wintermuth. **Otter:** Jon Milani.

Interested in helping support the Refuge? Become a MIWA member! See the back page for a membership form. Memberships may also be purchased online via our website at [www.merrittislandwildlife.org](http://www.merrittislandwildlife.org) or by phone at (321) 861-2377.



PO BOX 2683  
Titusville, FL 32781

321-861-2377

www.merrittislandwildlife.org  
miwa@merrittislandwildlifeassociation.org

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA), the non-profit friend's organization of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, was established in 1994 to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Refuge and provide assistance to Refuge programs

#### Directors & Officers

President	Chris Fairey
Vice President	Laurie Thompson
Treasurer	Bob Champaigne
Secretary	Tom Altif
President Emeritus	George English

#### MIWA Board Members

Thad Altman	Kathleen Burson
Jim Butts	Dan Click
Eric Gardze	David Hartgrove
Clay Henderson	Darleen Hunt
Robert Hutchison	Al McKinley
Jo Lynn Nelson	Ned Steel
Diane Stees	Charlie Vemuto

MINWR Manager	Layne Hamilton
MINWR Liaison	Kim King-Wrenn
LWNWR Liaison	Candice Stevenson
NASA Liaison	John Shaffer

#### MIWA Staff

Manager	Connie Cranston
Bookery Staff	Jessica Cravey
Bookery Staff	Alyssa Gralton

The Habi-Chat is published 3 times a year and available via mail and email.

Newsletter Editors	Connie Cranston Jessie Cravey Kim King-Wrenn
Technical Consultant	Cheri Ehrhardt

## MINWR Florida Scrub-Jay Survey

The Florida Scrub-Jays have had an amazing breeding year. They have almost doubled the number of fledglings from what that they did last year. This year there have been over 60 fledglings recorded. Since the month of July, James Lyon, a MINWR Biologist, has banded about 50 Scrub-Jays and all but three of those Jays were young ones.

For the banding process, Jim tries to get the birds habituated to the trap before so that they're used to being in the cage. He will place open traps throughout their habitat and leave them open. He'll place peanuts in and around the traps so that the Jays are free to go in and around the trap. I believe he is planning to do another banding before the winter months. When Jim and I were out, we saw a few Jays that were not banded.

The Scrub-Jays bands don't represent anything specific, but are randomized and given to Jim for the bandings each year. You read the bands as you would read a book, from left to right and from top to bottom. These bands allow him to keep track of the individual birds and family groups. There are 150 total family groups under the study and Jim studies 40 of those family groups.

Lindsay Green, Biological Science Technician Visitor Services MINWR



*Want to spot a Florida Scrub-Jay?* The Refuge has one of three stronghold populations of the threatened jay. With fewer than 8,000 remaining in the world, the Florida Scrub-Jay is one of the rarest species on the Refuge. Stop by the Visitor Center to get information about where you can view these amazing birds.

## Proposal to Extend Commercial Harvesting

All public uses of national wildlife refuges must be regularly reviewed and approved for both appropriateness and compatibility. The commercial fishing (seafood harvesting) use is currently scheduled to be phased out on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge/NWR) on September 30, 2018. During development of the 2008 Merritt Island NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determined a phase-out of commercial seafood harvesting was necessary to meet Service policy guidelines regarding appropriate and compatible uses. Due to concerns about economic hardship to individual harvesters and their families, the Service approved a 10-year phase-out of commercial fishing. However, during this 10-year phase-out period, permit holders were not adequately notified of the sunset date and the phase-out was not fully implemented as outlined in the CCP.

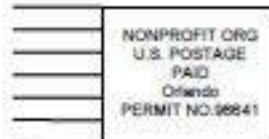
To address the shortcomings related to the phase-out, the Service has been evaluating options to develop a reasonable approach for all involved. To this end, the Service is recommending an extension to the phase out for an additional 10-year period (to September 30, 2028).

In accordance with Service guidelines and National Environmental Policy Act requirements, public involvement is an important factor in the development and review of the proposal to extend the commercial harvesting use another 10 years at Merritt Island NWR. We conducted a public scoping period from August 22, 2017 to September 8, 2017 to collect public comments early in the development of this proposal. The proposed 10-year extension would require revising the existing compatibility determination through a categorical exclusion documented in an Environmental Action Statement. Following public comment, the Service will review all comments received and will develop a draft compatibility determination and draft Environmental Action Statement which will then be made available to the public for a 30-day public review and comment period, which is anticipated for late October / November 2017. The Service will review all comments submitted and will respond to the substantive comments in an appendix included with the final documents. A final decision from the Service would be expected in November / December 2017.

Cheri M. Ehrhardt, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



**MIWA**  
P.O. Box 2683  
Titusville, FL 32781



## MIWA Annual Membership

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) depends on membership support to assist us in providing the much needed additional funding for Merritt Island NWR programs. Joining is simple, just fill out this form and mail it to: MIWA P.O. Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781. You may also join online at [merrittislandwildlife.org](http://merrittislandwildlife.org) or by calling the MIWA office at 321-861-2377.

Name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I want to pay my membership via:

Check    Money Order    Visa    MC    Discover    AMX

*Please make checks and money orders payable to "MIWA"*

CC #: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_   CVV: \_\_\_\_\_   Billing Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

_____ New	_____ Renewal
\$ _____ Student	\$20
\$ _____ Senior	\$20
\$ _____ Individual	\$25
\$ _____ Family	\$50
\$ _____ Tortoise	\$100 +
\$ _____ Bobcat	\$250 +
\$ _____ Sea Turtle	\$500 +
\$ _____ Otter	\$1,000 +
\$ _____ Alligator	\$2,500 +
\$ _____ Manatee	\$5,000 +
\$ _____ Donation	

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_