



The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

April-May, 2017

Volume 1, Issue 4

A season's reflection

As I look back on this year's season of programs, one thought keeps coming to mind: it all comes back to you, our volunteers.



We had record attendance at this year's concert and silent eco-auction, and it really takes a village to make an event like that such a success. The year of planning put in by the concert committee, the volunteer team captains who put in long hours from walk-throughs to hauling supplies to and from the park, and all of our volunteers and FGCU students resulted in over 600 hours donated towards making our concert a resounding success.

Our trail steward program continues to grow. Thanks to those of you who stepped up this year and our new volunteers who jumped in, did the training and hit the trails. This program will be even more important next year as we add Flint Pen to our trail systems. Due to its convenient location, we expect visitor numbers at Flint Pen to meet if not exceed those recorded during Bird Rookery Swamp's first year.

This year we expanded our Nature's Peace program to include the visually impaired through a partnership with Lighthouse of Collier. We appreciate the volunteers who acted as guides for all of our Nature's Peace programs and know that part of what makes this program special is that it is a valuable learning experience for all involved.

Everything we do would not be possible without you. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to CREW Land & Water Trust.

Field notes: Banding native sparrows for science

Bob Altman of the American Bird Conservancy partnered in January of 2017 with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the CREW Land & Water Trust to begin an overwintering sparrow pilot study on recently acquired CREW lands

between Bird Rookery Swamp and Immokalee Road.

The project's goal is to document the presence and abundance of wintering sparrow species of conservation concern, monitor the within-season survival of species included in the project, and determine the extent of site usage during the winter months by priority grassland species.



Data from this project will shed light on the importance of this grassland site for migratory sparrow species and help to direct management considerations to meet species needs as restoration of the newly acquired lands moves forward.

Through the middle of March, Altman has mist netted and banded 56

Grasshopper Sparrows, 12 Savannah Sparrows, and 6 Swamp Sparrows with assistance from SFWMD staff, FWC biologists, and CREW volunteers.

In addition, Altman plans to return in ensuing winters to mist net sparrows to see if this year's banded birds exhibit site fidelity and return to the same fields where they wintered and were banded.

Shared photos help increase awareness of CREW

Volunteers are invited to share some of their amazing photos from CREW trails which will be used to help increase CREW Trust's social media presence. For more information, please contact Anne Reed. Below is one of CREW Trust volunteer Bill Zaino's photos taken this year in Bird Rookery Swamp.



Input needed to improve volunteer experience

by Anne Reed

As we near the end of this year's season, it's time to reflect on our volunteer program.

Planning for the 2017-2018 season has begun and our volunteers play key roles, from guiding and assisting hikes to acting as trail stewards and completing trail maintenance.

Before we plan our programs, training sessions and socials, we need your input.

On April 12, you will receive an email asking you to participate in our 2017 Volunteer Survey.

Why is there a need for a survey?

This was my first season as your volunteer coordinator. I was once a volunteer, and I know what I liked about the volunteer program and what I thought could be improved. I know that each person has different wants and needs, and the survey will hopefully give me insight so I can change what needs to be changed, improve what can be improved and create new opportunities based on your ideas.

If you prefer to talk to me one on one instead of filling out the survey, just let me know. Your honest feedback will help us plan a 2017-2018 program that best fits our growing number of volunteers.

Season's volunteer hours donated, by-the-numbers

From November 1, 2016, through March 14, 2017, a total of 2,069.5 volunteer hours were donated by you, our valued volunteers!

<u>activity</u>	<u>hours</u>
Trail Stewards	446.0
Guided hikes and walks	346.5
Trail maintenance/exotics	350.0
Concert & Eco-Auction	200.5
Assisting field trips	130.5
Volunteer training	139.0
Office and clerical work	43.0
Public outreach	58.5
Other	355.5

On the job Leading 'specific topic' trail walks

Among the variety of guided walks offered to the public by the CREW Trust, walks focusing on specific topics are popular and well attended.

Walk topics are highly variable depending on the subjects that the volunteer leading the hikes is most interested in. These walks are in addition to the general walks offered weekly and to the Strolling Science Seminars.

Some of the subjects covered this season have included birds, usually at Bird Rookery Swamp; plants and flowers, usually at the Marsh Trails; and CREW history, also at the Marsh Trails.

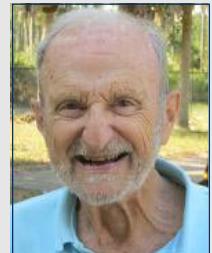
The walks are free but do require reservations and do have a maximum number of participants per walk.

The walks can be monthly or even just once during a season.

Volunteers who would like to share their areas of interest and expertise with others by leading a speciality walk during the 2017-2018 season should contact Brenda or Anne.

Getting it done

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to have led walks and to have met so many interesting people during those hikes.



"I've enjoyed that opportunity for the last 14 years. I've met people from many countries in addition to ours, and some of them have been very interesting. Among those are Peter and Janet from Canada and Eric and Rita from Austria.

"And some of the people I've met on the walks have become constant companions on other field trips that we've taken together."

Dr. David Cooper

Note: Dr. Cooper's walks focus on plants and on the history of CREW.

What do you do if... You find a tree or limbs blocking a trail?

Obviously, if it's small and manageable, move it to the side of the trail or drop it over the side of the boardwalk. It doesn't have to go far, just far enough that people can get through.

If it's too large for one person to safely move or if there are poison ivy or fire ants on it and there isn't a safe place to grip it, don't try.

Instead, make a detailed note of the location so others can go straight to it, and then call Brenda, who can alert SFWMD staff or CREW trail maintenance volunteers who will bring the needed tools or heavier equipment to safely remove the obstruction.

If it's just small debris like leaves and twigs, let it be. It's nature, not a manicured and manufactured landscape found in theme parks or formal gardens.

Staying connected

People

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Web sites

www.crewtrust.org
www.trackitforward.com (hours)
www.crewtrust.org/crew-trust-volunteers (volunteer library, the password is **crew17**)

Good apps for smart phones

bsafe (emergency location alert)
weather bug (radar, lightning)

The Buzzard Bulletin contains notes and information by and for CREW volunteers and is emailed six times a year (September, November, January, March, May, July). Dick Brewer, editor.