



# The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

October-November, 2020

Volume 5, Issue 1

## Notepad

### Welcome

Welcome to new CREW Trust volunteers Art Blatt, Richard DuBois, Makenzie James, Melissa Mari, and Chrissie Missal.

### No CREW concert

This season's CREW Concert & Silent Eco-auction has been cancelled due to uncertainty about February's social distancing and safety requirements.

### Field trips mixed

Collier County public schools  
*all fall/spring trips cancelled*  
FGCU Colloquium classes  
*fall field trips cancelled*

### No more than 10

To comply with social distancing guidelines, all CREW Trust walks and programs are limited to a maximum of ten people: eight visitors, one leader, and one volunteer sweep. Everyone must wear a face covering.

If additional people show up, they'll be asked to hike the trails by themselves and not be part of the group.

### Purple trail

Work on the purple trail linking the Flint Pen Strand and Bird Rookery Swamp trails is delayed until after the rainy season when the trail will be drier and passable.

The goal is to have it open to the public next season.

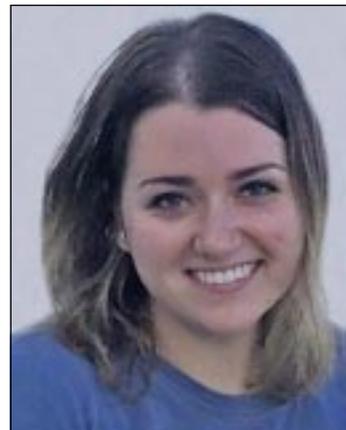
## Education interns join CREW Trust

**Vanessa Kraft**, *top*, is a senior at FGCU majoring in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Ecology & Environmental Assessment and minoring in Climate Change.

Born and raised in West Palm Beach, she enjoys paddle boarding, going to the beach, and rollerblading in her spare time.

"I am very excited to be interning with CREW Trust and learning more about this organization," she said.

Her time with the CREW Trust will allow her to add to her skills and knowledge, and to increase her networking contacts in environmental education.



**Sarah Buhler**, *below*, is a senior at FGCU majoring in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Ecology and Environmental Assessment and a minor in Education.

Sarah takes special interest in the local flora and fauna of the SWFL region, and is excited about teaching others about the natural landscape of SWFL.

She has volunteered at organizations including the Gulf Coast Humane Society, Wings of Hope Panther Posse, and the FGCU Food Forest.

She has a passion for education and loves inspiring students to grow their love for nature.

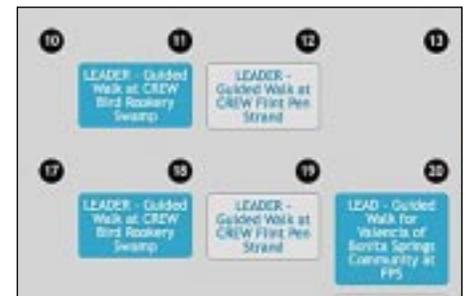
## Get program dates, volunteer online using Track-it-Forward

To volunteer to help at any of the CREW Trust programs, walks, or events, log in to Track-it-Forward the same way that is done to log hours.

After logging in, click the green EVENTS box to the right instead of the LOG HOURS box.

That opens calendars where events are listed. Scroll down to a particular month to see the events, click one of the event boxes, and scroll down to the bottom of the description to see if volunteers are needed

If they are, click and sign up.



## Avoiding snake bites

Some bites, such as those inflicted when snakes are accidentally stepped on or encountered in wilderness settings, are nearly impossible to prevent. But a few precautions can lower the risk of being bitten:

- Leave snakes alone. Many people are bitten because they try to kill a snake or they try to get a closer look.
- Stay out of tall grass unless you wear thick leather boots, and remain on hiking paths as much as possible.

And if you encounter a snake when hiking? Just walk around the snake, giving it a little berth—six feet is plenty. But leave it alone.

## Beware the milky eye

A cloudy eye on a snake is the first sign that the snake will soon shed its skin.

Snakes getting ready to shed are less active. Because they can't see, they are more vulnerable to predators, so they may strike at anything they sense is close and might be a predator.

Give all snakes an extra wide berth if their eyes appear cloudy or milky.

## Staying connected

### People

Brenda Brooks  
239-229-3948  
[brenda@crewtrust.org](mailto:brenda@crewtrust.org)

Allison Vincent  
239-287-4483  
[allison@crewtrust.org](mailto:allison@crewtrust.org)

Jayne Johnston  
239-229-1088  
[education@crewtrust.org](mailto:education@crewtrust.org)

### Web sites

[www.crewtrust.org](http://www.crewtrust.org)  
[www.trackitforward.com](http://www.trackitforward.com) (hours)  
[www.crewtrust.org/crew-trust-volunteers](http://www.crewtrust.org/crew-trust-volunteers) (volunteer library—the password is **crew17**)

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

## Identification tip

# Recognizing similar black snakes

The three snakes that are most frequently seen on CREW trails are often confused. Look at the head and the chin where it's easy to tell them apart.

### BLACK RACER

It has a long, narrow body that is all black on top. The head is not wider than the rest of the body. Its body looks a little shiny.

Its chin is a solid, creamy white color with no markings. The eyes are also relatively large for a narrow head.

It is a land snake and a good climber. It will rapidly flee when approached, and it is not venomous.

### BANDED WATER SNAKE

It has a thick body. Adults are all black on top, but juveniles have noticeable bands on the body. Its body looks matte (dull) unless it's wet.

The chin is white with thin black vertical stripes. Its eyes are visible from the top and its head is narrow.

However, if it feels threatened, it will try to flatten its body and look more like a Water Moccasin.

It is a water snake and is most active at night. During the day, it will only be out of the water to sun and warm up.

It does have teeth and can bite if threatened, but it is non-venomous.

### WATER MOCCASIN

It has a thick body. Adults are all black on top, but juveniles have noticeable bands on the body. Its body looks matte (dull) unless it's wet.

Its chin is darker and has wide brown blotches (not lines, not vertical). There is a thick brown band that runs through the eye and back to the body.

Its head is wider than its body and the eyes are not visible from above. Pit viper pupils are vertical slits; eyes of non-venomous snakes have round pupils.

It is an ambush hunter and is often in the tall grasses beside the trail where it is well camouflaged. It is never intentionally aggressive, but it won't flee



Black Racer



Florida Banded Water Snake



Water Moccasin

if someone gets too close. If it feels threatened, it opens its jaws to reveal a white inside (hence the other common name, Cottonmouth) as a warning to what it views as a potential predator.

Although venomous, if it does strike, many times it will be a dry strike so it can preserve its venom supply.

# Snake look alike

Animals and plants have evolved various strategies to avoid being eaten or attacked.

Some plants have developed thorns; others have a toxic or foul-tasting sap. Some insects like Monarch butterflies have caterpillars which adapted to and feed on the toxic saps, making them foul tasting as well.

The Viceroy butterfly, harmless and tasty for birds, has evolved to look like Monarchs so birds will avoid it too.

The term for this predator avoidance deception is *Batesian mimicry*. It is named after Henry Walter Bates, a nineteenth century English explorer who first noted that the close resemblance between unrelated species was an anti predator adaptation.

Batesian mimicry is where a harmless species has evolved to imitate the warning signals of a dangerous species. Predators of the dangerous species then would hesitate before attacking the look alike harmless species.

In the photos at the right, harmless snakes in the left column have evolved to appear similar to the harmful snakes in the right column.

With most of these snakes, the mimicry is with visual signals. But some can be behavioral.

When threatened, a Banded Water Snake will try to flatten itself and look more like a Water Moccasin. When cornered Black Racers will coil and shake their tails like a rattlesnake.

## SNAKE TONGUES

A snake doesn't have to open its mouth to flick out its tongue. There is a notch in the upper lip which is just big enough for the tongue to come out while the mouth is shut.

The tongue has no taste buds. Similar to membranes in our noses, membranes on a snake tongue capture scent particles from the air and ground. Then the tongue goes back into the mouth where the scent particles are transferred to the lining of cavities on the roof of the mouth and the odors are processed.

### Non-venomous

### Venomous

baby Black Racer



Dusky Pigmy Rattlesnake



baby Banded Water Snake



baby Water Moccasin



juvenile Banded Water Snake



juvenile Water Moccasin



Scarlet Kingsnake



Coral Snake

