



The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

February–March, 2022

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Notepad

Welcome

Welcome to new CREW Trust volunteers Charlie Egli and Tom Maish.

Megafauna

The next Hike & Learn walk for volunteers is Saturday, February 19, from 9 AM to noon at the CREW Marsh Trails.

The focus will be on Megafauna (big animals) such as panthers, gators, bears, and more. Behaviors, breeding, fun facts, and steps for safe interactions will be discussed. Sign up in Track-it-Forward.

Sweeping up

Sweeps are still needed for weekly guided walks and specialty walks. Pick a date and program and sign up in Track-it-Forward.

Owl Fest

Represent the CREW Trust at the 20th annual Burrowing Owl Festival on Saturday, February 26, at Rotary Park in Cape Coral.

Chat with festival-goers and hand out CREW goodies while answering any questions about CREW. Information is available upon sign-up in Track-it-Forward.

Volunteers can work in shifts which will allow them to visit and enjoy other parts of the festival.

Turkeys beware

This season's final hunt on CREW lands is March 5-13 for spring turkey in CDT, CPP, and FPS north of the hiking trails.

End of an era

Brenda Brooks retiring at end of March

As her retirement date approaches, Brenda Brooks can look back on her long involvement with CREW and look forward to the next chapter in her life.

Some of her fondest memories are of working with children dating back to her earliest years as the education coordinator.

At the end of one hike leading school children, one small boy came up to her, took her hand, and proudly told her, "This is the first time I've hiked outdoors."

His reaction to the hike impressed her enough that one of her primary goals with the CREW Trust became to introduce more children to the outdoors.

"I love the awe and wonder that kids freely express on the trails at CREW," Brenda said. "They are so excited to be outdoors."

And she enjoys being on the trails as much as they do.

When she hikes, it's usually at CREW. "I have favorite spots on all the CREW trails. I recall the first time I saw the trestle bridge at Bird Rookery Swamp. It was so beautiful."

"I love to get outdoors and help improve the trails," she said, citing trail maintenance as a favorite trail activity.

That enjoyment being outdoors will continue when she retires.

"I'm much happier playing in the woods. I have no doubt I'll enjoy our



new surroundings. Rick and I closed on a 42-acre parcel in Hendersonville, North Carolina, last February. Much of it is surrounded by DuPont State Forest and the Holmes Educational State Forest. We already have three game cameras up and are trying to get more acquainted with the flora & fauna."

The biggest changes she has seen dur-

ing her 17 years with CREW have been increased public access to CREW lands, from one trail system to four, and an increase in the number of volunteers from two to 63. "There's been a steady evolution and growth."

Her advice to her successor, Bob Lucius (*see page 2*) who will take over on April 1, is to "continue to surround yourself with good people."

New educator on board

Angel Kelley, CREW Trust's fall education intern, is the recipient of the third Dr. David Cooper education fund grant. Her new position will be the CREW Trust Environmental Educator.



She will continue working on projects she began during her internship in the fall, notably creating an improved presence of CREW Trust on social media.

As Environmental Educator, Angel will focus on facilitating education programs, will pilot the new FGCU colloquium program at Flint Pen Strand, and will help train the two new spring environmental education interns featured at the right.

New CREW Trust Executive Director Bob Lucius assumes duties in April

I'd like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to introduce myself a bit and tell you how excited I am about joining the CREW Team.

Over the next few months, I'll be doing my very best to slide into Brenda's very big shoes as she departs for new adventures. Although I won't actually be settling into the office until April 1, Brenda and I have already begun our turnover.

I'm thankful that we will have ample time to go through all the administrative, logistical, financial and operational details with the care and attention they deserve.



mission.

Brenda has already been kind enough to plan a few hikes to begin that process, but please don't hesitate to introduce yourself if you get the chance, or better yet, invite me out if you plan on hitting the trails!

Two spring interns join CREW education team

Savannah Pultrone, top, joins the CREW staff as an environmental education intern. Currently enrolled at FGCU, she is studying Environmental Education, Geology, and Climate Change.

She has been involved with environmental education for over a year as an intern with Big Cypress National Preserve and as a naturalist at FGCU. She originally found love for CREW after frequently hiking the trails, and more recently has helped out with trail maintenance and as a seasonal hunting check station operator.

Her spare time is spent hiking, talking about alligators, and wading in the swamp.



Laura Dunn, bottom, joins the education staff as an intern. She is a graduate of FGCU, where she earned a B.S. in Marine Science,

She taught in high school but has returned to FGCU to pursue her M.S. in Environmental Science with research in the marine environment and sediment flux.

In keeping with her interest in marine science, she has worked with local fishermen and the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve to protect seagrasses and benthic communities.

She loves fishing, hiking with her dog, and teaching others how to be stewards for the environment.



Staying connected

People

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Web sites

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www.trackitforward.com (hours)
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.

Owl trivia

- Five species of owls are year-round residents in Florida. The three large owls are Barn Owls, Barred Owls, and Great Horned Owls. The two small species are Burrowing Owls and Eastern Screech Owls.
- Owls don't have eye "balls." Their eyes are tube-shaped like binoculars and can only focus on what is in front of them. To compensate, they rotate their necks about 270° to see.
- Many owls have asymmetrical ears (located at different heights on their heads). This allows them to precisely pinpoint the location of sounds in multiple directions.
- Not all owls hoot. Barn Owls make a hissing sound, Eastern Screech Owls make a soft, horse-like whinny, and Burrowing Owls rattle.
- *Word of the day:* Zygodactyl. Owls are zygodactyl with two toes facing forward and two facing back rather than three forward and one back.

CREW's other owls



Eastern Screech Owls are small owls that are active at night and are heard more often than

seen. They roost in cavities and sometimes nest boxes. During the day, they are often in the opening of the cavity when the sun shines on it.



Barn Owls are medium sized owls that are mostly active at night. They roost in cavities, abandoned

barns, and other large open buildings. In CREW, they have nested in the maintenance building by the CREW office.

Whoooo's that? CREW's common large owls

Barred Owl



Barred Owls are common in the eastern United States and are spreading into the Pacific northwest. They are forest birds and need large old growth trees for nest sites.

The most common call sounds like *Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all*. The female is larger than the male, but the male has a larger voice box and a deeper voice.

Barred Owls prey on many types of small animals including squirrels, mice, rabbits small birds, frogs, crayfish, and reptiles.

The primary predators of adult Barred Owls are Great Horned Owls.

Barred Owls mostly nest in cavities 20-40 feet above the ground in large trees. They seldom add anything to a cavity. If nesting is successful, they will reuse the cavity in following years.

Only rarely will they use stick nests built by other birds, and then only adding lichens or feathers to line the nest.

Barred Owls mate for life and have one brood a year, laying 1-4 eggs. The size of the brood depends on the size of the nesting cavity.

Incubation takes 28-33 days, and the nesting period usually lasts an additional 28-35 days.

Courtship and nesting typically begin in late December or early January and owlets are first seen branching in late March or early April.

Great Horned Owl



Great Horned Owls are common throughout North America and can be found in a wide variety of habitats.

Territorial hooting is a loud, deep *Who-hoo-hoo, who*. The female is larger than the male, but the male has a larger voice box and a deeper voice.

Great Horned Owls are the top avian predators in Southwest Florida, preying on animals up to rabbit size and on birds as large as Ospreys and Barred Owls.

They also eat smaller prey including mice, frogs, and even large caterpillars.

They don't build their own nests. They usurp the nests of eagles, hawks, crows, and even squirrels. The nests deteriorate over the course of the breeding season and are seldom reused in later years.

Great Horned Owls are monogamous and have one brood a year laying 1-4 eggs. Incubation takes 30-37 days, and nesting lasts another 42 days. Owlets begin hatching in late January.

The "ears" are actually just tufts of feathers and are called "plumicorns." The word comes from the Latin *pluma* meaning feather and *cornu* meaning horn. No one knows what purpose they serve.

Owl hearing is very sensitive. The facial disc feathers direct sound waves to the ears on the sides of their heads.