

# FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

| Winter 2017 NEWSLETTER |



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## Paddling in Florida

**Kim Munshower**

This time of year the river runs dark. The quiet water reflects the sky, the cypress laden with wild pine, the oak dressed up in epiphytes. I arrive at the park early to get a good look at the river before guests start checking in. This simple practice of observing has become a treasured ritual; peaceful, quiet, intimate. Sometimes I am joined by a red-shouldered hawk screaming across the sky or an alligator prowling for the best basking place, and once my companion was a black vulture hopping down to the Hillsborough for a sip of cool water so close I could have



scratched behind his wing. But I am really here to decide if the conditions are good for the 2 hour guided paddle scheduled for the day; so I shrug off the distractions and take another good look at the river and the weather.

Truth be told, my motivations for becoming an ACA Coastal Kayak Day Trip Leader were not completely altruistic. There is something special about getting to know the Hillsborough River - its moods, its curves, its secrets. I have an excuse to escape from the highly developed neighborhoods surrounding me - immersing myself in nature, gliding weightlessly on beautiful dark water. Trip leading is just one more way for me to get my nature-fix...and hopefully hook others, too. This month the participants were an amicable camping meet-up group from Central Florida. Connecting with other Floridians curious about nature is one of my favorite parts of leading these paddles...I always learn something new from folks who have invested time in discovering natural Florida. In other months, I have shared my passion with first-time paddlers, families young and old, snow birds down for the season, college students escaping campus and even church groups. Each participant reminds me why the natural places of Florida are important to conserve, protect, restore, explore, and share.

My passion for sharing nature as an Advanced Florida Master Naturalist and leading guided paddles as an ACA trained trip leader fit together perfectly. While volunteering at Hillsborough River State Park, I get to share natural Florida with others from an alligator's point of view. I love helping participants make personal, real connections between the natural world and their own lives. I am not the only one. There is a small army of dedicated, trained volunteers who share my passion - but we need more folks willing to make this kind of difference in our state parks.

Currently, there are active paddle programs at Hillsborough River, Dunns Creek and Camp Helen State Parks. Even if we tally Ochlockonee River and St. George Island State Parks, whose paddle guides are taking a short break, we have a lot of room to grow! Pairing a paddle program with an interpretive message builds support for our State Parks and other natural areas left in Florida. There is a long list of parks wanting a guided paddle program to enhance their guests experience...I have a sneaky suspicion you might live near one of these gems:



Grayton Beach State Park  
 Lake Griffin State Park  
 Bald Point State Park  
 Manatee Springs State Park  
 Lake Kissimmee State Park  
 Rocky Bayou State Park  
 Anastasia State Park  
 Little Manatee River State Park  
 Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area  
 O'Leno State Park

River Rise Preserve State Park  
 Myakka River State Park  
 Stump Pass Beach State Park  
 Don Pedro Island State Park  
 Cayo Costa State Park  
 St. Joseph Peninsula State Park  
 Lake Louisa State Park  
 Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park  
 John D McArthur Beach State Park  
 Jonathan Dickinson State Park

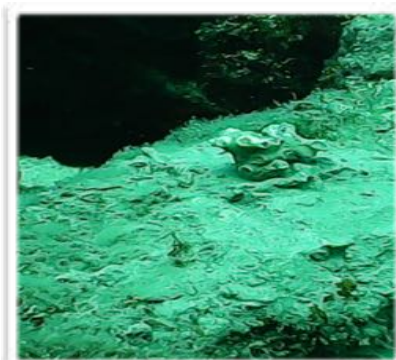
Your passion for Florida's natural side is an invaluable asset! Whether you are a master naturalist looking for a park where you can invest your volunteer efforts or a trained paddle guide, these parks need your skills, talents and abilities. To get involved you can contact Doug Alderson at the Office of Greenways and Trails, (850)245-2061 or [Doug.Alderson@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Doug.Alderson@dep.state.fl.us). He can connect you with the parks you want to invest in, pair you with a paddle guide who wants to add interpretation to their program, or get you information about our next ACA paddle guide training so you can do both.

As our group of paddlers leaves the kayak launch, I catch a glimpse of the morning sun playing in the tops of pine, oak, and cypress as the Hillsborough River slips through dappled undergrowth along its 56 mile journey to the bay. My heart skips a beat. Hopefully, along our route someone else will be breathless taking in the splendor of the river, captivated by its peaceful pace, dumbstruck with the wonder of this place. This is why I volunteer. Florida is just too big and beautiful and marvelous to keep to myself.

## Sarasota County Coastal Systems Module

**Kasey Gaylord-Opalweski**

The recent FMNP Coastal Habitats graduates had a great time at Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota! The group went on a variety of field trips, from exploring the dune habitat at Lido Beach to identifying creatures in Sarasota Bay to hiking the mangrove trails at Joan M. Durante Park. We look forward to another great class!



# FMNP Northwest Panhandle Chapter

## Chris Verlinde

The NW Panhandle district has successfully created a FMNP chapter for Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties! The group has held a few get-togethers the past few years and now have formally organized.

During the organizational meeting, Chapter members joined Caroline Stahala, Audubon Panhandle Shorebird Program manager along the Santa Rosa Sound to look for shorebirds. We saw about 10 species of shorebirds, the highlight was a foraging Reddish Egret.

A pot-luck lunch followed the field work and the first meeting of the newest FMNP chapter was on the books!

The board members are: Bob Pitts, chair, Carole Tebay, secretary, BettyLou Reid, treasurer and 3 at-large positions: Shelly Mangram, Aimee Wolters and Kayak Dave.

The next meeting of the Chapter will be December 5, 2017 at Blackwater River State Park.



*Kayak Dave*



*Shelly, Bob, BettyLou, and Carole*



*FMNP NW Panhandle Chapter members represented the FMNP at the 2017 Panhandle Butterfly Monarch Madness. The group offered children's activities and natural resource information.*

## Volunteer Algae Monitoring Program (VAMP) presented at FIT Technical Conference on Water Quality Ken Gioeli, UF/IFAS Extension St. Lucie County

Dr. Susan Hamburger presented the findings of the Volunteer Algae Monitoring Program (VAMP) in the Indian River Lagoon at the FIT Indian River Lagoon Research Institute's Technical Conference on Coastal Water Quality (TechCon2017) "from Science to Solutions" on September 29, 2017.

A specialized team of Florida Master Naturalist citizen scientists under the direction of UF/IFAS Extension St. Lucie County Extension Agent Ken Gioeli provided the "boots on the ground" volunteer efforts for the VAMP Program. Gioeli developed the program in response to the 2016 harmful algae blooms (HABs) in the Indian River Lagoon that resulted in dramatic impacts on businesses, residents, and visitors in Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties. The Florida Master Naturalist VAMP team collected water quality data, publicized VAMP to the public through a lecture series, and actively gathered baseline data and documented changes in the water quality in the Indian River Lagoon.

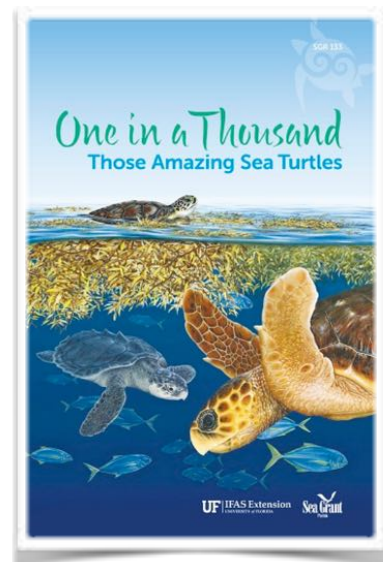
The VAMP team consists of Florida Master Naturalists Dr. Susan Hamburger, Neil Stover, Vicki Cowles, and Karl Mangino; and lead scientists Dr. Dail Laughinghouse IV (UF/IFAS Ft Lauderdale Research and Education Center) and Dr. Lisa Krinsky (UF/IFAS South Florida Extension District). The Florida Master Naturalist St. Lucie Chapter provided partial funding support for the project.



*Florida Master Naturalist Dr. Susan Hamburger presents at TechCon2017  
Photo Credit: Neil Stover, Florida Master Naturalist*

## New Sea Grant Publications

Florida Sea Grant and UF/IFAS Extension are supporters of the Florida Master Naturalist Program. Check out the latest [online and print publications](#) from faculty, staff and researchers at Florida Sea Grant. Just in time for the holidays, the new, illustrated, science-based chapter book "One in a Thousand: Those Amazing Sea Turtles" will spark interest in young readers and inform adults about sea turtle biology and ecology, as well as efforts to understand and protect these fascinating creatures!



# Master Volunteer Life Cycle: A Wide Angle Lens on the Volunteer Experience

Description by Holly Abeels

Extension master volunteer programs help Extension to disseminate information into the community and to further support the mission of Extension. The Florida Master Naturalist Program is just one of these master volunteer programs used by Extension. Master Naturalists receive detailed and specific education about Florida's natural resources and this information can be used when naturalists volunteer for various organizations. This article introduces a Master Volunteer Life Cycle Model that describes three phases of a volunteer's experience using the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program as an example. It describes recruiting, volunteering, and assessing phases of master volunteer programs and the volunteers that enter these programs. See the full paper [here](#).

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## OPPORTUNITIES: Volunteer Opportunities:

### Great Invader Raider Rally- Gainesville

The 4th Annual [Great Invader Raider Rally](#) (GIRR) is just around the corner, and Florida Master Naturalist volunteers are cordially invited! This year's rally is January 27th, 2018 from 11am to 1pm at Morningside Nature Center. This event is the new incarnation and necessary evolution of the popular, 15 year old Great Air Potato Round Up. Our 2017 volunteers enjoyed beautiful weather while removing over 7,252 pounds of exotic, invasive plants and 375 pounds of trash from natural areas throughout Gainesville! After working hard at sites throughout the city, participants will gather at Morningside Nature Center for a celebration with food trucks, music, prize raffles, displays and activities from local environmentally minded groups like yours! Save the date and [stay tuned](#) for the registration info.



## Citizen Science Opportunities:

### Audubon Florida

Audubon Florida is recruiting Master Naturalists for the [EagleWatch Citizen Science Program](#). Audubon EagleWatchers collect important data on nesting eagles in Florida including productivity, active nest locations, and possible disturbances or threats to nesting activities. Trainings are currently taking place around the state. If you are interested in participating in this Citizen Science program, download a registration form or email Shawnlei Breeding at [Eaglewatch@audubon.org](mailto:Eaglewatch@audubon.org).



### Florida Fish and Wildlife Scallop Restoration

In 2016, Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) began a 10-year project to restore bay scallops to self-sustaining levels in Florida's Panhandle. The objective of the scallop restoration project is to enhance the public's use and enjoyment of Florida's natural resources by enhancing depleted scallop populations and reintroduction to suitable areas from which scallops have disappeared. The restoration work includes enhancing local scallop populations in targeted areas through a combination of the harvest and redistribution of naturally-occurring juvenile and adult scallops supplemented with stocking from a commercial scallop hatchery. In addition to traditional approaches to restoration, our vision for restoring scallops also includes educating the public on our ongoing restoration projects and asking them to be contributing partners in these efforts.



Since the project began in 2016, they have worked with community members in St. Joseph Bay to collect scallops prior to the opening of the scallop season and place them in cages in an exclusion zone protected from harvest. They are currently working on developing partnerships with interested NGOs, county officials, schools, and the private sector to help restore scallops in St. Joseph Bay and St. Andrew Bay. The plan is to provide scallops and predator exclusion cages to community members in these areas prior to



the 2018 scalloping season. Community members will hang their cages with scallops from privately owned docks or, if they have a boat, they can place these cages in the bay. Volunteers must be willing to clean the cages at least once each month as well as monitor the scallops. They hope that by partnering with the community next year we will increase our chances of successful restoring scallops to St. Joseph Bay and St. Andrew Bay.

**To help volunteer with the FWC on this scallop restoration effort, please email [bayscallops@myfwc.com](mailto:bayscallops@myfwc.com).**



## Job Opportunities:

### Tarpon Bay Explorers

Tarpon Bay Explorers has an opening for a naturalist to lead tram tours in the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Florida. Must have a Bachelor's degree in biology, marine biology, environmental science, or a related field. Must also have clean driving record and either have a Florida Commercial Drivers license or be willing and able to obtain one (at company's expense). Must enjoy customer service and working with the public. Full and part time annual or seasonal positions available. Please send resume to Wendy at [EcoErler@gmail.com](mailto:EcoErler@gmail.com).





## Chapter Events:

### Northwest Panhandle Chapter

Join the NW Panhandle Chapter of the FMNP alumni at their first winter meeting. Come break bread and give us your thoughts and ideas. We will let you know where we are so far with the chapter. Meet at Blackwater River State Park on December 5, 2017 from 11-2pm. Bring a dish to share, hat, sunscreen, refillable water bottle, camera, field-gear, etc. [Click here](#) more information and to register.

### Mid Florida FMNP Chapter

The Mid Florida Chapter of the Florida Master Naturalist Program is proud to be the newest chapter serving the heart of Central Florida. We serve a wide variety of counties, including Seminole, Orange, Lake, and Volusia. Meetings are usually held at the Central Florida Zoo in Sanford, with various field trips, social gatherings, and community service events planned.

If you're interested in joining or have questions, feel free to contact us at [midfloridamasternaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:midfloridamasternaturalists@gmail.com)! You can also find us on Facebook - just search for Mid Florida FMNP.

Our next meeting will be a pre-holiday get together at Sanford's Mellow Mushroom restaurant, December 14th at 6:30pm. Please RSVP to the email address posted earlier by December 12th. Hope to see you there!

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## UPDATES FROM THE FMNP OFFICE:

### Coastal Shoreline Restoration

The new FMNP Coastal Shoreline Restoration course is off to a great start! Three courses have been completed (in Santa Rosa, Franklin, and Monroe Counties), 1 is [scheduled](#) for Pinellas County, and many more on the way! **Anyone interested in shoreline restoration is welcome to enroll** (homeowners, contractors, concerned citizens, politicians, managers, biologists, or naturalists). Enrollment is ongoing and course schedules vary. **[PLEASE SHARE THIS FLYER](#)** with any interested individuals, listserves, or groups!



## Have you been recording your volunteer hours?

The contribution of FMNP graduates' time and expertise on volunteer & citizen science projects across the globe is commendable and much appreciated!

Please record all of your volunteer & citizen science activities in the [FMNP Volunteer Monitoring System](#). This helps us demonstrate the tremendous impact that FMNP contributes to the natural systems that sustain us.

Simply go to the FMNP [website](#) and click on the "FMNP Volunteer Monitoring System (VMS)", type in your last name, find your name from the drop-down, and enter the requested information. Your volunteer hours will appear on the FMNP Graduate and Honor Roll Database on the website (takes 24 hours to update).

In the future, we plan to offer special rewards for accumulated volunteer hours, so start recording yours now!

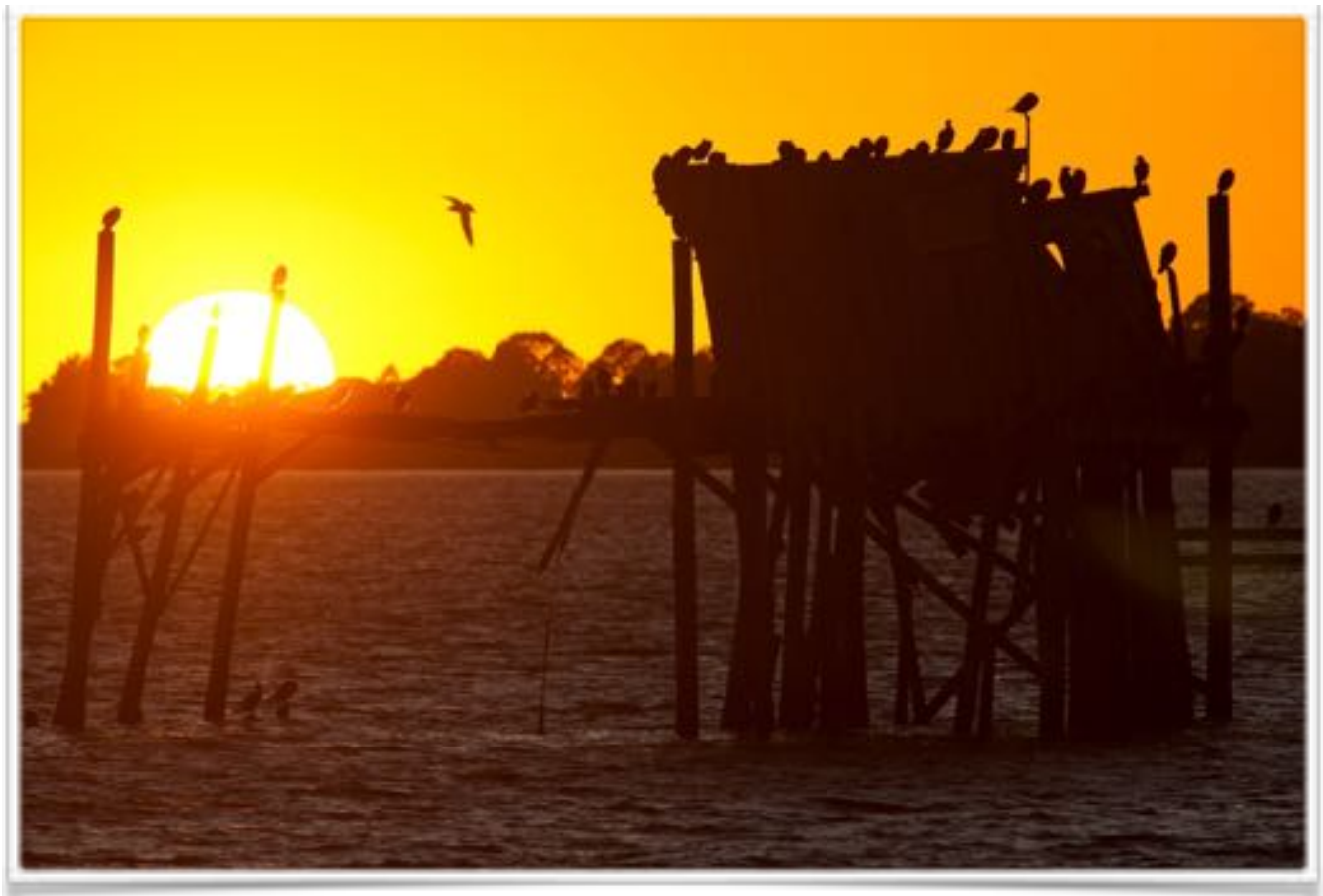


## K-12 Teacher Scholarship

Did you know the Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) offers a [Teacher Scholarship](#) to certified Florida teachers who are currently employed by a public or private K-12 school. Scholarships cover the entire cost of one FMNP core module or special topics course. Scholarships are awarded semi-annually based on region, applicant statement of your interest, and letter of recommendation. Please share this information with any K-12 teachers and/or schools. Next application deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup>. Visit the FMNP [scholarship webpage](#) for more information on this and other scholarships available.

## Annual Survey Coming Soon!

2017 will be a year to remember! We hope you had a wonderful year exploring, learning, and sharing the wonders of Florida's natural world. The FMNP will soon be distributing an annual survey to all FMNP graduates. This statewide survey is a chance to give your feedback to the FMNP state office and most importantly, to share the memories and accomplishments you have made as a result of your participation in the FMNP! Please keep an eye on your email in December for the anonymous online survey link; we greatly appreciate your participation. And as always, if you have a story to share, please feel free to contact the [office](#) directly.



*Photo: UF/IFAS Extension*

## Upcoming Courses:



## Come Be Social!

Don't forget to check out our Facebook and Instagram pages! As a follower, you will be able to communicate with the FMNP staff and other environmental enthusiasts. We share events, news, and photos from all across the state and FMNP courses. We encourage you to post and tag us throughout your own FMNP journey and to use the hashtags #FloridaMasterNaturalistProgram and #FMNP to find other posts. Click below to follow!

Follow us on:



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