NORTH FLORIDA LAND TRUST

LANDSCAPES

NFLT O2O Program Coordinator, Kimberly Tillman, looks on as staff is educated on the age of the old-growth longleaf pine that inhabits Big Pine Preserve.

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SAVING FLORIDA'S LANDSCAPES GETS BIG SUPPORT

Florida Legislature unanimously passed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which means big things for the O2O Wildlife Corridor.

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WHEN THE WORLD CLOSES, NATURE IS OPEN

The pandemic enabled many of us to rediscover the importance of nature.

NORTH FLORIDA LAND TRUST

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

FALL 2021

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Friends and Supporters,

A few days ago, I was talking with one of our Board Members who said, "It is a privilege to do what we do at the North Florida Land Trust." I agree! We have so many wonderful people, like you, who support our efforts. We have an extraordinarily talented and dedicated staff who work every day to make North Florida a better place to live and work. A Board of Directors who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our organization.

Every day, we meet landowners, donors, government officials, and industry executives who want to protect the natural resources we cherish. The truth is, there is so much more to do that; no matter how hard we try, we do not have the capacity to undertake it all. So, while we celebrate our successes so far this year, we have more in the works before year-end.

By the time you read this, our Board will have adopted a new strategic plan, including a revised mission statement and a new vision statement. We are excited about that move forward. It will allow us to focus our energy on what we do best. We will continue to protect our natural resources that directly affect our water quality and quantity, areas that prevent storm damage and flooding, resiliency projects, our local farms and ranches, our parks, and our preserves. Therefore, we will continue to protect our quality of life.

It is truly an honor to do this work!

With gratitude,

Jim McCarthy

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NORTH FLORIDA LAND TRUST

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NFLT is an accredited land trust. The mission of the North Florida Land Trust is to preserve and enhance our quality of life by protecting North Florida's irreplaceable natural environment.

WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT NFLT BEFORE END OF YEAR

Because of the worldwide pandemic and related restrictions, your donations to charity are needed more than ever this year. And, with charitable tax deductions, your generosity will be rewarded. The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act is designed to help businesses and nonprofits facing economic hardship during the coronavirus pandemic.

Here are a few key provisions of the CARES Act that may affect you and your philanthropic goals:

TAX INCENTIVES

The CARES Act expands charitable giving incentives and allows taxpayers who take the standard deduction to make up to $300 filing single and $600 filing jointly of philanthropic contributions to qualified charities this year. You might think that this is a small amount and would not make a difference. But what if all our donors gave "just" $300? Such support would have a significant impact on those we serve.

For those who itemize their deductions, the law allows for cash contributions to qualified charities such as North Florida Land Trust to deduct up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for the 2021 calendar year.

REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS

The CARES Act extended the unlimited charitable contribution for cash gifts to most public charities through the end of 2021. This creates an essential once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to move substantial amounts from retirement plans to charity beyond the $100,000 qualified charitable distribution already allowed to Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners without adverse income tax consequences.

Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.

You pay no income taxes on the gift. In addition, the transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions. Since the gift doesn't count as income, it will not increase your annual income level. This may help lower your Medicare premiums and decrease the amount of Social Security that is subject to tax.

GIVE A GIFT OF STOCK

By giving stock held for at least a year, the 15 percent capital gains tax typically incurred can be potentially eliminated if you sell. In addition, stock donations to charities, like the North Florida Land Trust, are eligible for a charitable tax deduction on both federal and state taxes—adding up to potentially significant savings.

BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION

IRAs or other qualified retirement plans are often one of the most tax efficient assets to leave to charity because they are taxed so heavily when left to heirs. When you designate a nonprofit, such as the North Florida Land Trust, as the beneficiary of an IRA as part of your estate plan, 100 percent of the gift will be available to support your philanthropic interests.

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS
TO JOIN THE NFLT TEAM

This year North Florida Land Trust has experienced many changes internally. The pandemic has caused many of us to reflect on what is important and the changes we need to make within our lives. We have said farewell to many long-time staff members as they have begun new chapters, and we have welcomed great people to our team. NFLT was no exception to the changes that COVID has caused for many nonprofits and businesses, but one thing this organization has always been is resilient, thanks to extraordinary leadership and support from our community. We would like to welcome the staff members that have joined NFLT in the last year.

LEE ANDERSON LOUY, EdD
DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPIC SERVICES

Lee Anderson Louy joined NFLT in 2021 and serves as the Director of Philanthropic Services. Lee helps individuals and organizations develop and achieve their philanthropic goals. Bringing over a decade of nonprofit leadership and donor experience, Lee is passionate about advancing the NFLT mission for Jacksonville and beyond.

Before working for NFLT, Lee worked as the Director of Development with the University of North Florida, focusing on developing and nurturing long-term relationships on behalf of the University. She was with the University for nearly nine years, and prior, Lee served as the Director of the Bennie Furlong Senior Center with the City of Jacksonville. Lee graduated from the University of North Florida with a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, holds a master's degree in Public Administration, and earned her bachelor's degree in Recreation and Leisure Services Administration from Florida State University.

Lee is a Jacksonville native with a deep admiration for the Northeast Florida region and is invested in creating a lasting impact in our community.

BREANNA BLAKE
MANAGER OF OPERATIONS

Brenna Blake joined NFLT in 2021 and currently serves as the Manager of Operations. She is currently working on her bachelor's degree in business administration. Brenna has six years of experience in management and she is very honored to be working to help better our communities and lands of North Florida. Previously from California, Brenna moved to Florida in November 2020 and is excited to start her new journey at NFLT. Her goal is to make a positive impact on the community and help to make a change.

HEATHER NAGY
CONSERVATION ACQUISITIONS COORDINATOR

Heather Nagy joined NFLT in 2020 as a Conservation Acquisitions Coordinator. Heather works with the director of conservation acquisitions to coordinate land transactions, manage the real estate database and research potential real estate projects.

Heather comes to NFLT after working for three years at Peninsula Open Space Trust in California, where she managed the conservation easement program and helped facilitate acquisition projects. She also worked with Tar River Land Conservancy in North Carolina. There she helped develop a strategic conservation plan for the Upper Tar River Basin.

Heather earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Florida, her master's of environmental management from Duke University and has received a graduate certificate in geographic information systems (GIS). For her master's project, Heather researched lemur habitat in a national park in Madagascar and developed a GIS-based model of forest loss to help guide future conservation projects in the area.

RIANNA ELLIOT
LAND MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

Rianna joined NFLT in 2021 as the Land Management Specialist. She will be assisting with NFLT's growing stewardship and land management responsibilities, including prescribed fire planning and implementation.

Rianna comes to NFLT with over a decade of experience with the Florida Park Service. As a Park Services Specialist, she focused most of her energy on resource management and prescribed fire. Over time, she achieved her certified prescribed burn manager status as well as other certifications to enable her to better preserve the lands she was charged with restoring and protecting. She has also assisted multiple agencies with prescribed fire through trainings and knowledge exchanges over the years. Prior to her work with Florida Park Service, Rianna spent several years with a non-profit organization working with at-risk youth.

SAVING FLORIDA'S LANDSCAPES GETS A BIG SUPPORT FROM STATE LEGISLATION

By: Susan Carr and Kimberly Tillman, NFLT O2O Program Coordinator

Photo by: Jean Blom

In April 2021, the Florida Legislature unanimously passed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act. The Act is now law after being signed by the Governor in July 2021. The Act defines the Florida Wildlife Corridor as a geographically defined area in Florida spanning over 18 million acres, of which 10 million acres are existing conservation lands. The Florida Wildlife Corridor includes Priority Level One, Two, or Three. These priority areas are designated by the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. The Corridor is comprised of "critical linkages" that include existing conservation lands, and private connector lands.

The primary goals of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act are to:

- Maintain habitats needed for wildlife migration and genetic exchange, including wildlife crossings.
- Prevent further wildlife habitat fragmentation.
- Protect headwaters of major watersheds, and critical groundwater recharge lands essential for Florida's drinking water and healthy coastal estuaries.
- Protect ecological connectivity for large-scale ecosystem functions, including fire and hydrology.
- Sustain Florida's working ranches, farms and forests for wildlife habitat, rural prosperity, and agricultural production.

The Act directs State agencies to:

- Acquire lands within "opportunity areas" of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Opportunity areas are lands that are not yet in conservation.
- Encourage investment in voluntary conservation easements.
- Encourage private funds to supplement public funding to protect Corridor opportunity areas.
- Seek opportunities to attract additional federal funding.
- Encourage new approaches and novel financing methods, including payments for ecosystem services, blended financing, and support for sustainable agriculture.

Specifically, the Act allocates $300 million for protection of the Florida Wildlife Corridor this year. This funding is in addition to $100 million appropriated to the Florida Forever conservation program in the state budget.

HOW DOES THE O2O WILDLIFE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE FIT?

The Ocala to Osceola (O2O) Wildlife Corridor is a piece of the Florida Wildlife Corridor, also known as a "critical linkage in the Florida Wildlife Corridor." The O2O service area is nearly 2 million acres, of which most is designated as part of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. About half of this area is already conservation lands, and the other half is "opportunity area" as defined by the Act.

The O2O Partnership is a collaborative of public agencies and private organizations dedicated to conservation of the O2O Wildlife Corridor, and in the larger sense, to building the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The Partnership's goal is to conserve an additional 140,000 acres in the O2O by 2040. The Partnership is already working on O2O conservation projects totaling over 70,000 acres. Furthermore, the Partnership directs funding and assistance for private land management to protect and restore wildlife habitat, water resources, and working lands.

The Partnership's goals and progress in the O2O Wildlife Corridor complement the objectives of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act. This is a great opportunity to help NFLT build and protect the O2O, which is an essential piece of the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

HOW WILL THE O2O WILDLIFE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE BENEFIT?

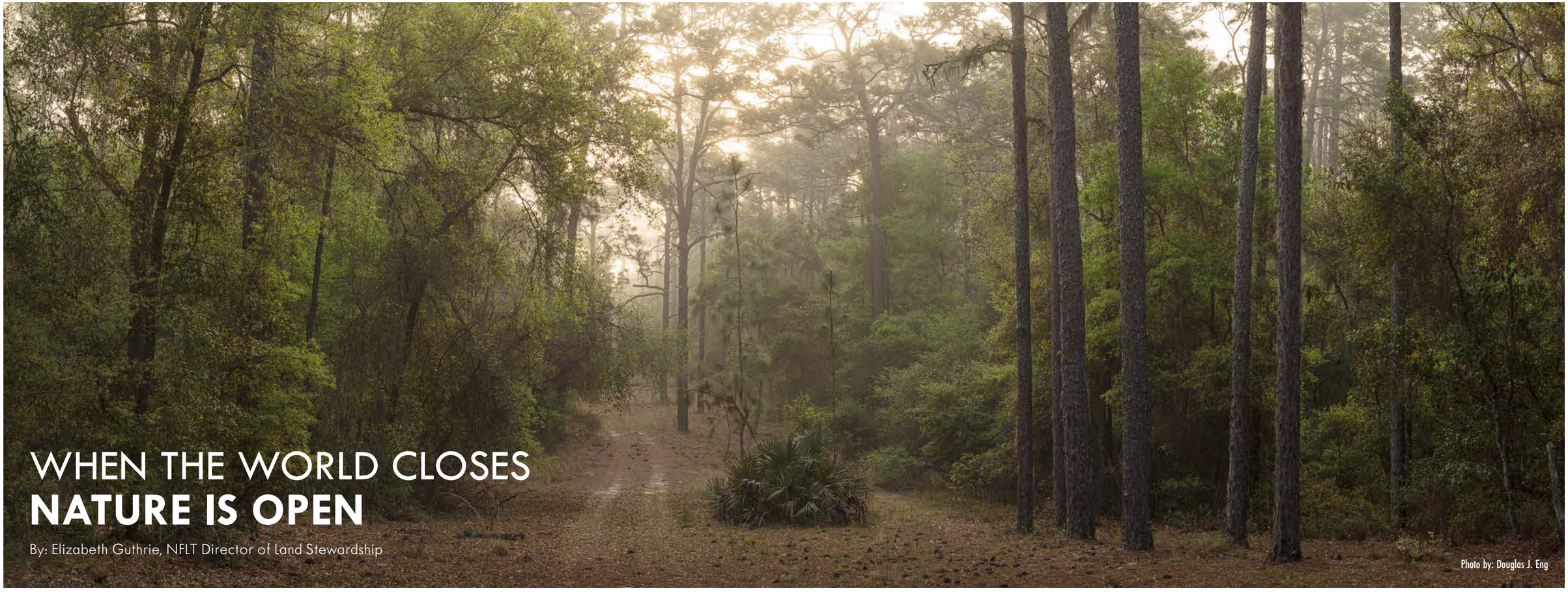
This act will increase appropriations for land conservation totaling $400 million this year. These funds are specifically allocated to the protection of land in the Florida Wildlife Corridor and for the Florida Forever program.

About 82 percent (roughly 1.5 million acres) of the O2O falls within the Florida Wildlife Corridor, as defined as Priority One, Two, and Three areas of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. About one million acres are already conservation lands, including publicly owned and private lands with conservation easements. Much of the non-conservation land (i.e., the 441,621 acres "opportunity area") is in approved Florida Forever project areas. These lands can be acquired by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection pending available funding and willing sellers.

More conservation funding is good for the O2O, in that it will accelerate the acquisition of environmentally important lands. The demand for conservation options exceeds funding supply, and there are many landowners in the O2O who are eager to sell their land or apply a conservation easements. The O2O initiative is centered on the concept of large natural landscapes and rural connector lands and the new legislative focus on the Florida Wildlife Corridor will certainly benefit the O2O.

The O2O initiative is centered on the concept of large natural landscapes and rural connector lands and the new legislative focus on the Florida Wildlife Corridor will certainly benefit the O2O.

Along with federal funding for the O2O, NFLT is always working hard to line up additional funding sources that will support the operations of the O2O Wildlife Corridor and Partnership. In July 2020, the EJK Foundation of Houston, Texas, made an initial award of $450,000 toward the O2O. Along with that award, they also issued a challenge grant of $75,000. If NFLT was able to raise $75,000 for the O2O by August 31st, 2021, they would match the $75,000 1:1 bringing the total additional money to $150,000 for the O2O. Our supporters made it happen! The EJK Foundation has now supported the O2O with a total of $600,000 to span two years time. Thank You, EJK, for your support toward the operations of the O2O Partnership and the connection of the O2O Wildlife Corridor!



WHEN THE WORLD CLOSES **NATURE IS OPEN**

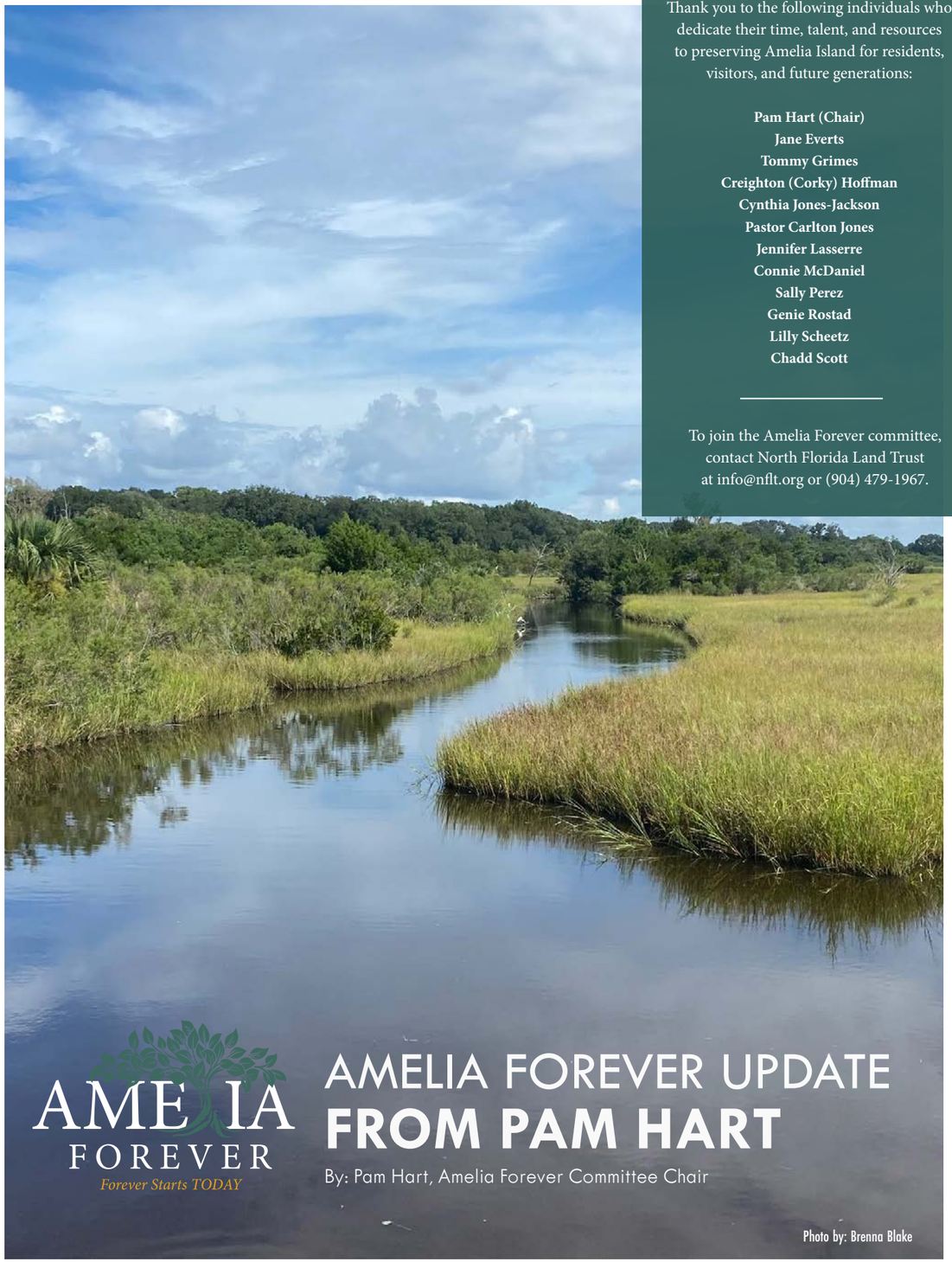
By: Elizabeth Guthrie, NFLT Director of Land Stewardship

Photo by: Douglas J. Eng

Take a moment and think about the last time you spent quality time outdoors. Did you walk on the beach? Visit a national park? Maybe you watched birds in your backyard or took the dog for a walk around the neighborhood. Now think about how you felt while you were outside. There is no doubt that exercising outdoors can improve our health, but did you know that even just physically being outside and exposed to nature can have significant benefits for your well-being? Studies have shown that in as little as seven to ten minutes, people experience lowered heart rates, lower blood pressure, less muscle tension, reduced stress, and improved mood when exposed to nature. If you can't recall the last time you spent quality time outside, consider this a friendly reminder to do so.

During the pandemic, and particularly during periods of lockdown, many of us sought refuge outdoors to escape cabin fever and reduce stress. While events, family gatherings, and milestones were being canceled, nature was still open. Taking a walk with someone offered a way to get together with friends or family while following social distancing guidelines. Millions of Americans discovered a new interest in outdoor recreation, flocking to public parks and natural areas in record numbers. Park and land managers around the country reported high visitor counts, including at parks and preserves owned and managed by fellow land trusts. In some cases, measures had to be taken to address overcrowding and parking lot overflow. At North Florida Land Trust's public park, Bogey Creek Preserve, we also experienced increased numbers of visitors. Thankfully, Bogey Creek Preserve is within a large expanse of the city, state, and national parks in the 7 Creeks Recreation Area, offering visitors many alternatives in the event of overcrowding. While millions of Americans were discovering or re-discovering outdoor recreation opportunities, it also became evident that millions of Americans do not have equal opportunity to engage in outdoor recreation, largely due to lack of access, or absence of parks or green space in their communities. These disparities are felt largely by Black and Brown Americans, and in urban communities.

The coronavirus pandemic has forever changed the way we live and work. People are now seeking larger homes with ample backyards or outdoor spaces, and proximity to parks. The need for more conservation lands, green spaces, and parks is evident now more than ever. NFLT currently owns and manages one public park, Bogey Creek Preserve, in Jacksonville, with another in the works, Rideout Point Preserve, in Middleburg. Purchasing conservation land, transforming that land into park space, and then managing that public park requires a tremendous investment of financial and staff resources. With your help, we can make it happen. Oh, and don't forget to go outside today. Your mind and body will thank you.



AMELIA FOREVER UPDATE
FROM PAM HART

By: Pam Hart, Amelia Forever Committee Chair

Photo by: Brenna Blake

AMELIA FOREVER COMMITTEE

Thank you to the following individuals who dedicate their time, talent, and resources to preserving Amelia Island for residents, visitors, and future generations:

Pam Hart (Chair)
Jane Everts
Tommy Grimes
Creighton (Corky) Hoffman
Cynthia Jones-Jackson
Pastor Carlton Jones
Jennifer Lasserre
Connie McDaniel
Sally Perez
Genie Rostad
Lilly Scheetz
Chadd Scott

To join the Amelia Forever committee, contact North Florida Land Trust at info@nflt.org or (904) 479-1967.

This past year has been an especially trying year due to Covid, the virus that we're all so sick of hearing about and which has affected so many lives. Some good things have come from this however. When events were canceled and businesses and schools were closed, I saw more families out enjoying the natural spaces on Amelia Island than ever before. People were out biking and hiking and sight seeing outdoors and rediscovering this beautiful place. It really is spectacular. And there is one thing about nature, it's never closed and it's not canceled! If we want to preserve this way of life, we must preserve land that makes up our green space and wildlife habitat on this island. We have a fragile ecosystem and it is quickly changing due to unprecedented development pressure. That's why Amelia Forever was formed, to raise funds to buy land on Amelia Island to conserve it forever through North Florida Land Trust. Conserving wildlife habitat simultaneously preserves our quality of life. It saves the trees that shear wind during storms and their root systems that absorb rising waters. The more development that you have, the more impervious surfaces you also have that leads to erosion from flooding during storms as water finds the path of least resistance. With more development comes more traffic and congestion, which has a huge impact on quality of life. We don't want to end up like so many other areas in Florida with major traffic and congestion issues. We are at a tipping point and we ask that you please help us to preserve our collective quality of life by donating to Amelia Forever at nflt.org/ameliaforever. We have successfully preserved three lots adjacent to Egan's Creek Greenway this past year and two parcels on the edge of downtown. We are currently trying to preserve Little NaNa Dune, adjacent to the beautiful NaNa Dune that is part of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. It is covered with beautiful salt pruned trees and is an important area for shorebirds and gopher tortoises and is culturally significant. Please help us save the beautiful natural places on Amelia Island by donating today!

Pam Hart, Amelia Forever Committee Chair. Photo by: Lilly Scheetz

AMELIA ISLAND LANDS ARE BEING PRESERVED, THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS WHO DONATED TO SAVE THEM!

Thank you to our numerous donors who have put us closer to reaching our fundraising goal of $1.305 million to preserve Little NaNa Dune forever. We are approximately $150,000 away from reaching our goal, and you can help make a difference today!

GIVE TODAY!
www.nflt.org/ameliaforever

SMALL ISLANDS WILL BE PROTECTED FOREVER

By: Rebecca Perry, NFLT Director of Conservation Acquisitions

On July 29th, through the generous donations of many of you, NFLT purchased 29 acres of the Small Islands. This 29-acres of salt marsh and flatwood islands is directly adjacent to the City of Jacksonville's Cradle Creek Preserve and was the first phase of the 245-acre purchase. This property is part of a broader system of salt marsh habitat spanning the southeastern coast, and it serves as habitat for the majority of Florida's commercial and recreational fish and protects the coastline from storm surge and coastal flooding. This salt marsh ecosystem is also a bastion for birds. A 2019 study showed that the number of birds had decreased significantly since the 1970's across all habitats, except one – wetlands. Despite the overall decline in bird populations, there was an increase in birds using wetlands (Rosenberg et al., 2019). This underscores the importance of protecting wetland ecosystems such as this one. Bird species that overwinter on and around this property include plovers, warblers, and waterfowl, among many, many others. Protecting wetlands like this can help overwintering birds like these from declining further. As a vital part of the larger food web, declining bird populations signal danger for ecosystems overall, but the good news is that by protecting properties like this and others underway, there is hope for the future. And the best news of all is that, NFLT recently secured all of the funds needed, largely thanks to the River Branch Foundation, to protect the remaining 216 acres of the Small Islands! Closing will take place in the next few months.

Photos by: Britt Brown

Photos by: Charlotte Bernhard

TEAM TERRAPIN UPDATE

By: Charlotte Bernhard, NFLT Stewardship Technician

This has been a record breaking year for Team Terrapin. With over 724 total nests, our 2021 team has found more nests than any other year since 2009. We have also broken our record of intact nests found, previously 70 nests in 2019, by finding and monitoring over 80 nests. Inventories of these nests went great, with many live hatchlings successfully making their way to the marsh. We could not be more proud of our team of volunteers, and our beautiful terrapins.

THE PAINTED BUNTING PROJECT
WRAPS UP ITS FIFTH YEAR

By: Kim Savides, *Master's Student, Utah State University. Department of Wildland Resources & The Ecology Center*

Male Painted Bunting

Female Painted Bunting

Geolocator used to monitor latitude and longitude each day.

You can see the geolocator placed on a male Painted Bunting.

Photos by: Kim Savide

This year the Painted Bunting project conducted another season of field work spanning North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, continuing our work studying the population ecology and migratory connectivity of the Painted Bunting. The Painted Bunting is a colorful, charismatic breeding bird found along the coastal maritime forests of the southern US, which the Jacksonville area represents the southern breeding range extent of the species.

Researchers from the Smithsonian, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, University of Georgia, and Utah State University have been collaborating to investigate the migratory routes and wintering grounds of the Painted Bunting across their range. Currently in its fifth year, the project has made several findings, including identifying the wintering grounds of male Painted Buntings by using datalogging backpacks on the birds. These tiny (0.5g) tags, called "geolocators," measure light intensity throughout the day, allowing researchers to roughly estimate latitude and longitude each day. Most of the male Painted Buntings from the project were found to winter in southern Florida and Cuba.

This year the research team set out to retrieve geolocators from female buntings which were caught and tagged in 2020. We captured a total of 228 individual buntings across the four study sites, recapturing 72 previously captured birds and banding 156 with numbered leg bands to serve as unique identifiers if they are caught again in the future. In Florida, we observed fewer than expected Painted Buntings at our long-term feeder site, recapturing nine and banding three, as compared to 27 recaptured and 34 newly banded in 2020 with similar capture effort between years. In addition, we were able to recapture one of fifteen females given a geolocator last year.

Though these are low returns and recapture rates, these are not unexpected given this site is at the range extent of the species—making this exceptionally important data, especially in the context of the project's long-term dataset. The location data from the recovered geolocators will be added to those recovered from the other study sites and will reveal where the females wintered and what routes they took, serving as a comparison to those data previously collected on males.

In addition to recovering geolocators, the research team attached radio tags to several Painted Buntings in NC, SC, and GA in a pilot project. These small tags sit as a backpack on the birds and emit a unique code over a specific wildlife-tracking frequency. A specialized network of radios tuned to this frequency (the MOTUS Network), dot the migratory route of the buntings. If the tagged birds fly within about ten miles of a tower, their location and time will be logged. Radio tracking data such as this provides fewer days of location data than geolocators, but with much greater precision, and will serve as a great comparison to the data collected by the geolocators.

If our tagged birds continue to be detected on migration this season, we hope to be able to expand our radio tagging efforts to the FL site next year.

With fall migration upon us, we have begun to see some of the radio tagged birds be detected at towers south of their breeding location—including on a tower in the Jacksonville area. If our tagged birds continue to be detected on migration this season, we hope to be able to expand our radio tagging efforts to the FL site next year. Comparing multiple tracking methods will help estimate survival across the range of the species, evaluate the importance of critical coastal breeding habitats, and identify potential threats to bunting survival in efforts to support the long-term persistence of this species.

NORTH FLORIDA
LAND TRUST

To preserve and enhance our quality of life by protecting North Florida's irreplaceable natural environment.

Ocala to Osceola (O2O) Wildlife Corridor. Photo by Amanda Mason