



The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

June-July, 2017

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Reflection, renewal, appreciation

It's time to recharge.

Our trail systems are waiting for the rainy season to start and bring much-needed water to recharge our watershed and fill our aquifers. And just like the lands within the CREW Project, we also need to be recharged.



Our programming season has come to an end and you, our volunteers, have put in a record-setting amount of hours. From November, 2016, through April, 2017, you donated 3,288.5 hours, up from 2,081 hours for the same time period last year.

That is amazing. And a lot of hard work.

I know that the hours you donate to the CREW Trust are hours taken away from your friends, family and other activities. We appreciate that, and we strive to make sure you feel valued and appreciated.

That's why we are carefully evaluating the results of the volunteer survey and planning our volunteer training and events for next season around your wants and needs. We are also planning our events and volunteer opportunities in a way that we hope will most efficiently use your time and talents.

Thank you again for a wonderful season!

by Brenda Brooks

Remember to log hours

Please log your CREW Trust summer volunteer hours, whether at home, off-site or at activities, including travel time, at www.trackitforward.com. Contact Anne if you have questions.

Field notes: Swallow-tailed Kite nesting surveys

Excitement builds in mid-February when residents in Southwest Florida begin to see the first Swallow-tailed Kites (STKI) return from an arduous 3,500-mile migration from their wintering grounds in Brazil and Bolivia to the southeastern United States to nest.

According to the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville, Florida, in the early 1900s, Swallow-tailed Kites nested in 21 states throughout the United States. More recently their nesting range has been reduced to just seven states with approximately 2,500 breeding pairs.

Since 2015, FWC CREW biologists, with the help of volunteers Dick Brewer and Rick Mears, have been conducting annual Swallow-tailed Kite nest surveys on CREW lands.

Each week from February through May, we locate and monitor active nests

in order to determine nesting density and nesting success.

Additionally, we collect vegetative and landscape data around the nest to characterize optimal nesting locations. That information is added to data in the Avian Research and Conservation Institute's model that predicts nesting activity and identifies critical habitat.

This year we have already located 27 active nests on CREW lands – 16 in Cypress Dome, 6 in the CREW property near Pepper Ranch, 3 in Flint Pen, and 2 in Corkscrew Marsh.

Through the middle of May this season, we have confirmed 19 chicks in these nests and have 7 more chicks that are suspected to be in the nests but have not yet been visually confirmed. We will continue monitoring the nests and chicks until they fledge.

by Kathleen Smith



Report adults carrying nest material



Monitor, record mating activity



Watch for adults carrying food to nest



Record progress of chick development

Summer improvements prepare for next season

After the dry winter and spring, the time to work on the trails without having to wade in waist deep water or shoe sucking mud has come. Sure, it's hot! But it is the best time to reach areas along the trails that need attention.

It can be as simple as going off trail to pick up a water bottle that the December winds blew out of a walker's fanny pack, or moving a downed tree that may block water flows, or installing a perch for our feathered ambassadors. It's a time of cleaning up, picking up and having a walk about.

The lull in visitors also provides a great opportunity to tackle big projects.

In mid June, Bird Rookery Swamp will close for two weeks while the eastern 370 feet, or about one-third, of the boardwalk is replaced. Funds for this project's Phase I were provided by Big Cypress Basin unit of the South Florida Water Management District. The extensive construction would not be possible during high season.

One already completed off-season improvement at Bird Rookery Swamp was the installation of two culverts in the trail (*see below*) where last year's waters cut deep channels across the trail. Three shallower channels were also filled in. So come next season, hikers and bikers should be able to travel the entire trail without having to wade through rapidly flowing water.

The summer is also a time for planning for the next season's activities.

By this time each year, the entire schedule of events for the coming sea-



On the job

Volunteering in CREW Trust office

Details, details, details...

If you have owned a small business, worked in an office or prepared your taxes for filing, you know how important small details can be. It's the same at CREW.

While some volunteers lead walks or pull invasives, the small but mighty staff is often dealing with those myriad details that make that work possible. Volunteering to help in the CREW office provides a unique opportunity to help keep it all going.

Office volunteers help maintain communication with members, send correspondence, update databases, edit and proofread materials, help the staff prepare for meetings and events. And yes, there's copying and collating. But there's also a chance to discuss issues, give input and learn much more about our mission and challenges while sticking on stamps and labels.

If you're interested, contact Brenda to discuss the possibilities.

son is set in print. Who's doing what on what day is already outlined. Detailed information on next season's activities and attractions will be in the August/September *Buzzard Bulletin*.

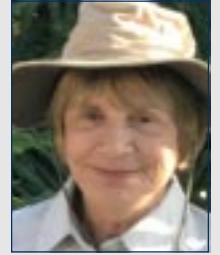
Summer is also a time to pilot test new programs and a time to research funding opportunities and grants.

For year-round volunteers, think about how to become involved in some of these summertime projects. Some of them can even be conducted at home.

by George Luther w/Dick Brewer

Getting it done

"I've always been an 'organizer,' so helping with administrative work is right in my sweet spot.



"But the real reason I value the opportunity to help out in the office is to provide the staff with more time to do the important work they do. It's more valuable to our mission for me to do record keeping than have staff members taking their time to do it.

"And there's an added benefit. The slow two-mile drive into the office can be a private nature excursion. Swallow-tailed kites soar overhead, deer skitter across the road. I could be greeted by the Sandhill Crane family or maybe even a panther track in the dust. Just heaven!"

by Barbara Centola

Staying connected

People

Brenda Brooks

239-229-3948

brenda@crewtrust.org

Jessi Drummond

239-229-1088

education@crewtrust.org

Anne Reed

419-206-8800

anne@crewtrust.org

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 e-mailed six times a year (September, November, January, March, May, July). Dick Brewer, editor.