



The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

April-May, 2019

Volume 3, Issue 4

Notepad

Welcome

Welcome to new CREW Trust volunteers Pete Cangiolosi, Hilda Glazer, Bob Green, Sean Hunt, Jim Mantor, and David Stein..

Orange Trail

Volunteers are creating a new trail in Flint Pen Strand that will take visitors through the pines east of Vincent Road and to the lakes.

New parking lot

A second parking lot is under construction in Flint Pen Strand off Harrell Avenue to allow visitors to more easily explore the marsh and lake areas east of Vincent Road.

Access to the new parking area on Harrell Avenue will be via Vincent Road. Several gates and barriers will be installed to insure that vehicles can only travel on the road and do not drive into environmentally sensitive areas.

Swallow-tailed Kite nesting update

As of March 29, our team of biologists and volunteers has located 34 Swallow-tailed Kite nests in the CREW Management Area of which 11 are re-nests from a previous year and 23 are new nests.

In total, 41 nests, 26 of them new, have been located on properties encompassing the CREW Management Area, Conservation Collier, and private properties.

Upcoming programs need volunteers

Volunteers are needed who can spend a few hours assisting upcoming education programs. Any volunteers who are able to help with any of the following, please contact Savannah.

FGCU at CREW Marsh Trails

April 1: 1 pm - 2:30 pm
Intro to Earth Science class

Outreach Event: Celebrate Bonita at Riverside Park, Bonita Springs

April 6: 4 pm - 9 pm
Shift 1: 2:30 pm - 6 pm
Shift 2: 6 pm - 9:30 pm (one needed)

Soil ROCKS! 2nd grade Program at Cypress Dome Trails

May 8: 10 am - 1 pm
May 9: 10 am - 1 pm

Elementary school hikes at Cypress Dome Trails

May 14: 9 am - 12 noon
Veteran's Academy of the Arts
4th grade

May 15: 9 am - 12 noon
Veteran's Academy of the Arts
4th grade

May 16: 9 am - 12 noon
Veteran's Academy of the Arts
4th grade

May 21: 10 am - 1 pm
Bonita Springs Charter
3rd Grade

May 22: 10 am - 1 pm
Bonita Springs Charter
3rd Grade

May 23: 10 am - 1 pm
Bonita Springs Charter
3rd Grade

CREW grasslands increasingly important

Winter sparrow banding was recently completed at CREW's Gargiulo South property.

There were 36 mornings of banding over a five-month period, and approximately 20 volunteers helped in this third year of the project.

There were 122 newly banded Grasshopper Sparrows, 62 Savannah Sparrows, and three Swamp Sparrows.

Additionally, there were 32 returns of Grasshopper Sparrows (32% return rate) banded in previous years, eight returns of Savannah Sparrow, and one return of a Swamp Sparrow.

The Gargiulo South site supports an estimated population of 350

wintering Grasshopper Sparrows of the migratory subspecies *pratensis*.

This is a significant population for this grassland bird which has experienced population declines throughout its breeding range north of Florida, and is listed as State Endangered or Threatened in seven states in the northeast.

Additionally, the high return rates to this site along with very high between-season fidelity to the same net lanes suggests a high quality site with a stable population.

The study will resume in November, 2019, and volunteers are always welcome to assist. Contact Bob Altman at baltman@abcbirds.org.



Future topics planned, suggestions welcome

Visitors ask lots of questions. Some are quite reasonable while others are a bit on the weird side.

In this newsletter and the next several, basic background information will be offered on a variety of species that visitors frequently inquire about.

Hopefully, the information will provide trail stewards and other volunteers with some of the basic answers to the more reasonable questions.

Most questions are about alligators, so gator information is the first in this series of *The Buzzard Bulletin* articles.

The list of future topics that visitors often inquire about or should be informed about includes River Otters, Poison Ivy, Fire Ants, cypress knees, and venomous and non-venomous snakes.

Volunteers with suggestions for other species should please email Dick Brewer at rdbrewer@gmail.com with their ideas.

Staying connected

People

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Web sites

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

Good app for smart phones
weather bug (radar, lightning)

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.

Alligator questions: The Top 10 List

10. Is it a male or female alligator?

There are two ways to tell. (1) size: females don't get over 9-10 feet long, so if it's longer than that, it's a male. Less than that and you can't tell by length. (2) If there are baby gators very close, it's a female. Males would eat the babies.

9. I just heard a deep, strange sound? Was that an alligator?

If the sound was long, like a fog-horn, yes. If it was a short burst, no. That would be a Pig Frog.

8. An alligator just disappeared under the water. How long can it stay there?

If it's actively swimming, it can stay under about 20 minutes. If it's resting, it can stay under for two to three hours.

7. How many babies does an alligator have, and when are they born?

A female gator can lay from 40-50 eggs in the late spring. They incubate over the summer and hatch in late August or early September. On average, only about 20 actually hatch, 10 survive their first year, and only 1 out of the 20 survives to be a breeding adult.

6. What do alligators eat?

They mostly eat fish. Other food includes turtles, small mammals, birds, and reptiles/amphibians. Big gators will eat smaller gators, but a mother won't eat her own offspring.

5. How long do alligators live?

In the wild, they can live to be 40-50 years old. In captivity, they live longer because they don't have to work for a living.



4. How long is that alligator?

Estimate the distance between the eyes and the nostrils in inches. That number is about how many feet long the gator is. Half a gator's length is its tail and the other half is the rest of the body. When gators are first born, they are 8-9 inches long. They grow about 8-10 inches a year until they are about four years old, and then growth depends on how successful they are catching prey.

3. Why do alligators lie on the trail, and what should I do if one is in my way on the trail?

Gators are cold blooded, so they rely on their environment to regulate their body temperature; their ideal body temperature is about 89°. When it's colder than that, they lie in the sun on the trail or on a bank to warm up. If one is in the trail ahead of you, the safest move is to turn around and go back.

2. How fast can alligators run?

Contrary to popular myth, gators cannot outrun a horse. A racing quarter horse can reach speeds of 55 mph. A human track sprinter can reach speeds of 20 mph. A reasonably fit person can go 10 mph when properly motivated. A gator has a max speed of just 7-8 mph. Gators are very fast coming out of the water because their tails propel them. Once on land, they lack speed and endurance.

1. Will I see an alligator? Is it alive?

Wherever there is fresh water in Southwest Florida, there could be gators. Gators are mostly nocturnal hunters, so during the day, they rarely move or appear other than to regulate their body temperatures.