

CONSERVATION FLORIDA

WILDPOST

ISSUE 24



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CONSERVATION
FLORIDA



Letter from the Editor

Frances Nevill, Director of External Affairs and Strategic Communications

Friends,

As we take a moment to reflect on the remarkable journey of Conservation Florida, I'm filled with admiration for the vision and dedication that has propelled this organization from its humble beginnings to its current role as Florida's premier, boots-on-the-ground land conservancy. It's hard to believe that it all began nearly 25 years ago.

David Carr, son of conservationists Archie and Marjorie Harris Carr, along with his wife Peggy, a scientist whose research created the Florida Wildlife Corridor and established the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails, planted the seeds of Conservation Florida in Micanopy, Florida – a place so many of our state's pioneers like Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings drew inspiration from. Carr's vision was simple yet profound: protect the wild places that define our state's unique beauty, biodiversity, and ecological integrity. Little did he know that nearly 25 years later, Conservation Florida would grow into a statewide land conservancy protecting wild and working lands from the Florida Panhandle to the Florida Keys.

The early iterations of the Florida Wildlife Corridor maps bear our original name: Conservation Trust of Florida. We're proud to see the impressive progress in the years since its creation.

Today, with our name changed to Conservation Florida, it fills my heart with pride that we've also blossomed into a powerhouse of conservation advocacy. Our voice propelled the passage of conservation policy, including the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, and powered historic funding for land conservation. **We've protected nearly 40,000 acres, with more than 100,000 more acres in the works.**

We launched a groundbreaking docuseries, "Protect Our

Paradise: Presented by Conservation Florida," and now our work and efforts are being shared nationwide through the power of visual storytelling.

The resolve of our community, volunteers, and partners have proven that when protecting both Florida panthers and black bears, or the emerald waters of Florida's springs, the possibilities are endless.

I encourage each one of you to find that piece of inspiration in these pages. As you peruse the pages of *WildPost*, take a moment to reflect on the stunning landscapes, natural wonders, wild and working lands, and wildlife species that you've helped protect. Whether you contribute your time, your monetary investments, or your voice, you've made a difference. Together, we can continue to write the story of Conservation Florida – a story of hope, resilience, and commitment to the Sunshine State.

The stories in *WildPost* are the result of a team effort. It takes a team to protect this place we love so much. A magazine takes a team, too! I'd like to thank contributing editors, Sarah Shepard and Cyndi Fernandez, for their contributions to *WildPost*. Friends, you are a part of this work, too! You're on this journey with us to protect the Florida we love. We can't do this without your support.

Together, we can ensure that the legacy of our founders and the dream of Conservation Florida shine brightly for generations to come. 🐦

With gratitude and sunshine,

Frances Nevill




@oldfloridavibes

About Conservation Florida

Conservation Florida is your land conservancy.

Together, we are saving the places Floridians love. Conservation Florida is saving land, conserving Florida, and protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor for future generations.

What we save and what we pave this decade will impact Florida forever. So, this is it. Your moment to make a lasting impact.

Our Mission: Conservation Florida is grounded by a deep love for Florida and a history of impactful, boots-on-the-ground land conservation. We are a statewide land conservancy protecting Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes, with a primary focus on saving land within the Florida Wildlife Corridor. 

**Our mission is to protect Florida's natural
and agricultural landscapes for future generations.**





For the Love of Florida



By Traci Deen, President + CEO

At Conservation Florida, we firmly believe that Florida is the best place to live, work, visit, and explore. It's a state that offers endless opportunities and treasures – from its breathtaking beaches to its vibrant city life. But with growth comes responsibility. **We must be conscious of what we save and what we pave.**

Our mission is clear: to conserve our land and water, to connect a statewide corridor, and to advocate meaningfully for conservation. We understand that the availability of freshly grown food, breathable air, fishable lakes, and swimmable beaches is not guaranteed. That's why Conservation Florida's dedicated team is working tirelessly to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

We are a statewide land conservancy driven by a profound love for Florida. Since our founding in 1999, we have been engaging in impactful, boots-on-the-ground land conservation efforts across the state. **From Pensacola to the Florida Keys, our goal remains consistent – the protection of our water, wildlife, and wild places.**

Conservation Florida has prioritized strategic and evidence-based land protection. In rural areas, we're collaborating with ranchers and other landowners to place conservation easements on their family lands so they can continue operating sustainably and not transition to development. In urban areas, we establish preserves to provide communities with access to nature and open spaces. We also work closely with various stakeholders, including businesses, civic

groups, governments, and residents, to preserve culturally, historically, and ecologically significant places across Florida.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and partners, together, we are shaping Florida's conservation future. As a result of your investment in conservation, thousands of acres of high-priority habitat across Florida are permanently protected every year.

Currently, we have more than 60 active conservation projects spanning the state, over 100,000 acres underway. These projects focus on supporting Florida's native plants and wildlife, fresh water, wildlife corridors, family farms and ranches, the economy, and nature-based recreation. None of this is possible without your unwavering support. Each day, we are grateful for the opportunity to work toward preserving the beauty and diversity of our beloved state.

Our targeted advocacy efforts in Tallahassee have played a substantial role in the allocation of significant funding to the state's Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands Protection Programs, the conservation of critical lands, and the celebration of the Florida Wildlife Corridor vision. These achievements are momentous steps toward safeguarding our state's wild, wonderful places and our natural heritage.

Florida has made history with its unprecedented state funding for land conservation in recent years. State leaders have demonstrated a profound commitment to conserving land by allocating a record-breaking amount toward the protection of our precious landscapes – nearly \$2 billion in state funding over the last three years. This historic investment is a testament to Floridians' dedication to safeguarding our home.



Carlton Ward, Jr., Wildpath



With substantial funding for acquisitions, Conservation Florida is prepared to expand our efforts significantly. We are initiating new projects, strengthening existing ones, and reaching more communities across the state, and that is why we need your support at this critical time. Without you, we cannot do this work.

We're collaborating with a broader range of partners – from local farmers to state agencies – in our mission to conserve Florida's natural and agricultural lands. It's an exciting time for conservation in Florida, and we are deeply grateful for this opportunity to make a lasting impact on our beloved state. To our new readers, join us! To our community, thank you – and stay on this wild ride with us. We're saving land!

Conservation Florida is proud to support local conservation ballot measures. Regardless of political affiliation, Floridians recognize the importance of protecting our shared land and water. By passing these measures in Polk, Brevard, Indian River, Alachua, Pasco, and Nassau counties, voters have ensured a consistent source of funding for essential land conservation services that benefit our communities.


Your support is translating directly into acres saved.

It's difficult to quantify the true value of woods, water, and wildlife until we start losing them. But for those who have witnessed their disappearance firsthand or experienced the awe-inspiring beauty of a Florida spring, the urgency is crystal clear. We all have a reason to stand up and protect wild Florida.



Yes, Floridians don't often agree – and can be a wild bunch – but when it comes to the love we share for Florida's land and water, we find common ground. It's woven into our ethos, our Floridian ethic, and our heritage.

We stand at a moment like no other. Together, with your help and our shared values, we can achieve great things in our beloved state. We can continue to foster a healthy economy while also safeguarding the special places that define Florida and can never be replaced.

If you believe as we do, that a healthy, sustainable future lies in protecting our water, wildlife, wild places, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor, then join Conservation Florida. Join us today, and let's work hand in hand for the love of Florida and its bright future. Together, we can ensure that generations to come will experience the wonders of our beautiful state. Let's keep Florida wild, let's keep Florida, *Florida*. 



At Conservation Florida, we work tirelessly to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes because this is our paradise! It's yours, too, and here's how you can contribute to the campaign to save this magical place while we still can.

MONETARY DONATIONS:

Make your tax-deductible donation securely and conveniently online or send a check directly to our office. Make a one-time gift or become a recurring donor by pledging a fixed amount monthly, quarterly, or annually.

We accept gifts at our headquarters:

Conservation Florida
37 N. Orange Avenue, Suite 323
Orlando, FL 32801

IN-KIND DONATIONS:

Donating professional services or retail products can play a significant role in our work. Whether it's technology, apparel, outdoor tools, or food and beverage, your contributions can help protect important places across the state.

Consider donating goods or professional services!

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS:

For those who wish to make substantial monetary contributions, a Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) can manage and maximize your charitable giving. You receive an immediate tax deduction and can recommend grants to Conservation Florida over time. We are a member of the Central Florida Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin Counties, but you may direct grants from any DAF to Conservation Florida.

Direct grants to Conservation Florida from your DAF.

IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER:

IRA owners age 70½ or older can make tax-free gifts up to \$100,000 annually from individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to Conservation Florida through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

QCDs offer eligible Americans a way to give big to Conservation Florida before the end of the year. For those who are at least age 72, QCDs count toward the IRA owner's required minimum distribution for the year.

If you meet the criteria, consider making an impactful, tax-free gift from your IRA.

LEAVE A LEGACY:

Commit to a transformational legacy gift via planned giving. Options include donating your 401k, real estate, retirement and savings accounts, or any combination of assets. Your wish to apply your wealth toward the protection of wild Florida is the greatest gift to the future.

Make Conservation Florida a beneficiary when you update your estate plans.

CORPORATE GIVING AND SPONSORSHIPS:

Corporate sponsorships and in-kind contributions save land, and corporate philanthropy promotes employee affinity and boosts morale. Consider Conservation Florida as a partner in meeting corporate responsibility goals by sponsoring our signature events and making in-kind contributions.

Partner with us to protect our paradise.

WORKPLACE GIVING PROGRAMS:

Does your workplace offer a matching gift program where you can contribute directly through payroll deductions? If so, you can maximize your budget and your philanthropic contributions.

Double your impact by taking advantage of corporate matching programs.



This Brand Saves Land

Does YOUR brand save land? Do your company's values align with ours? When you partner with

Conservation Florida, you are protecting our paradise. You're saving land – and the wildlife that depends on it.

Our collaboration isn't one-size-fits-all. Let's get wild with it! For every product you sell, a piece of paradise is on the path to protection. Every Florida-brewed beer sipped could create a brighter Florida future, with a portion of the proceeds going back to our conservation work. The opportunities for partnership are endless.

We'll work with your team to brainstorm other innovative ideas like co-branded, eco-friendly products, unique digital campaigns, or engaging community events. We're flexible and ready to bring your brand's personality into the mix.

Get in touch at info@conservationfla.org to partner!

REAL ESTATE:

Deed your property (e.g., a home, vacant land, or an investment property) to Conservation Florida to sell in support of our land protection work. A gift of real estate may reduce your capital gains tax, provide an income tax deduction, and, in certain cases, allow you to continue using or living on the property.

Donate all or part of your property to Conservation Florida.

DONATE STOCKS, BONDS, AND MUTUAL FUNDS:

Make a bigger impact by donating long-term appreciated securities (e.g., stocks, bonds, and mutual funds) directly to Conservation Florida. Compared to a monetary donation, you may be able to automatically increase your gift and your tax deduction by more than 20% because you won't be required to pay the federal long-term capital gains tax or Medicare surtax.

Make a gift of appreciated securities to Conservation Florida.

Conserving Ranches Means Protecting Wild Florida

It's **hard** work and **heart** work, but it's glorious all the same – we're talking about Florida cattle ranching. The job is thankless in many ways, but many don't know that ranches in Florida are some of the last, vast wildlands in the state. Or that without protecting ranchlands, the Florida Wildlife Corridor will never be conserved. Simply put, cows are keeping Florida **green**.



@adamstrangbass

Land values have been on the rise for years as residents migrate south to the Sunshine State. In 1960, fewer than 5 million called Florida **home**. That number jumped to 23 million – and it's still rising. **A population the size of Orlando moves to the state each year.**

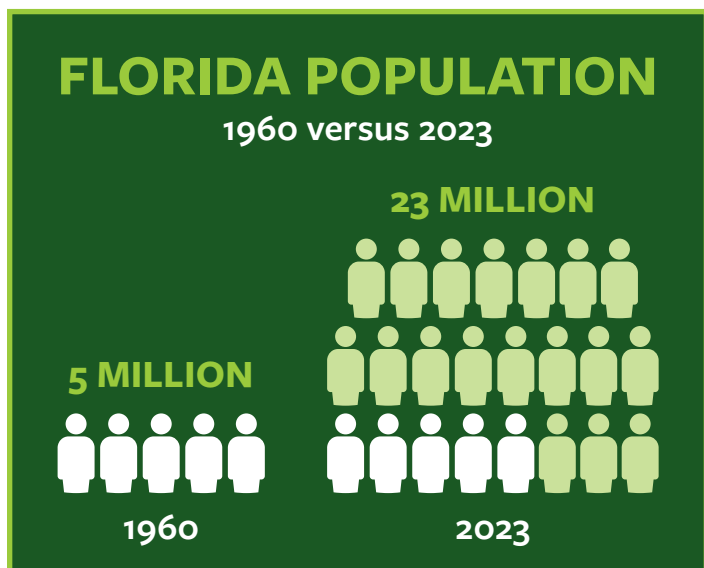
But it's ranches, not rooftops, that are contributing to the long-term health of our state's wildlife and residents. They're also keeping places that would become cookie-cutter, concrete, single-family homes from meeting that fate – for now. Ranches indeed provide a rich service to our future.

Florida ranchlands provide critical habitats for our native species, and from the swamps to the sandhills, they are key to supporting our unique biodiversity.

Many ranchlands preserve landscapes in their natural and untouched conditions, keeping lands wild and harboring pockets of Old Florida.

In 2021, Florida lawmakers passed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which outlined the importance of protecting a statewide, functional wildlife corridor. Within that corridor are 3.2 million acres of ranchlands making up about 18% of the existing corridor – and less than 20% of those lands are protected.

Florida is the birthplace of cattle ranching in America. In 1521, on Ponce de León's second trip to the land he named La Florida, the Spanish explorer brought along Andalusian cattle – something never seen in America.





@adamstrangbass

Today, there are about 15,500 operations, encompassing more than 7 million acres of land with some 1,750,000 head of cattle, and more than 5,000 registered brands in Florida. The future of Florida's conservation success depends on the protection of Florida's ranchlands.

So, Conservation Florida has teamed up with the Florida Cattlemen's Association to tell the story and convey the importance of Florida's cattle ranchers as integral to the protection of Florida's Wildlife Corridor, wild Florida, and more.


These ranchers are the keepers of Florida's last frontier, ranchers like Matt Pearce.

"I am a seventh-generation Florida rancher whose family settled along the western shore of Lake Okeechobee, and grazed cattle along the Kissimmee River before there were fence laws," Pearce said. "My great-grandfather traveled to Tallahassee in 1934 and was one of the original founders of the Florida Cattlemen's Association."

Pearce believes that in Florida, **land conservation and ranching go hand in hand.**

To those outside of the agricultural community, cattle may be question marks in the conservation conversation. But we now know that grazing livestock may just be the most economical and sustainable solution for conserving the declining populations of dependent species – like the critically endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow – and do so much more. Ranches in Florida provide some of the **last, vast green spaces in our state and are vital to connecting the Wildlife Corridor.**

We're working to bring those ranches into conservation – to keep them working and wild. But time is of the essence. Wild and working lands are wasting away to pavement, complexes, and subdivisions. We need your help!

Let's think beyond the beaches, look inland, and thank a rancher for keeping Florida, Florida...and join us as we work to protect Florida's beautiful, rich ranchlands. 



@anna_crocitto

The Florida Wildlife Corridor

Half of Florida – connected to *all* of us

Conservation Florida is grounded by a deep love for Florida and a history of impactful, boots-on-the-ground land conservation.

Much of our work is focused on one living, breathing geography: the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

After decades of work from conservationists, scientists, politicians, and many others, the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act was signed into law following unanimous bipartisan support by the Florida Legislature in 2021.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act – the first major win in Florida land conservation – recognized a network of nearly 18 million acres of connected lands and waters supporting wildlife and people in law.

With this win in hand, legislators and the governor have allocated unprecedented funding for land conservation.

So...what's at stake?

The Florida Wildlife Corridor spans roughly **18 million acres** – but nearly **8 million acres** are still left unprotected.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor in a nutshell:



Roughly
18 million acres



75+
state parks



**More than 130 imperiled
animal species**



**Nearly 70 at-risk
plant species**



**Supports more than
110,000 jobs**



**Generated roughly
\$30 billion in annual revenue**



Where is it?

Within the corridor, you'll find not only buzzing, sweeping swamps and lazing rivers, but also bustling, busy cattle ranches. Green space galore – it's all filled with life.

But all of that is at risk. As Florida's population booms, new roads, housing developments, and shopping centers fragment natural ecosystems. Poorly planned expansion of cities cut off the natural and necessary movement of wildlife between conservation lands.

It's our job – and yours, too – to protect this paradise we call home.



Why protect it?

When future generations look back on the 21st century, they will note that Florida had a chance to do something incredible. Something visionary.


The Florida Wildlife Corridor means a Florida that protects the places we all love, offers habitat and room to roam for our native species, cleans and stores water, provides ample outdoor recreational opportunities, and supports Florida's family farms and ranches – all while accounting for Florida's future growth.

Animals like panthers and black bears require large, connected areas to roam in between core protected areas, and ecosystems need space to shift in response to sea level rise and climate change. That's why Conservation Florida is working to protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Wild Florida needs our help before it's too late.

How can you help?

Conservation Florida is on the front lines of the campaign to permanently protect land within the Florida Wildlife Corridor – and we need your help!

From volunteering in our communities to donating to Conservation Florida, you can make a direct impact on our future Florida. 





Letter from the Board

Dear Friends of Conservation Florida,

On behalf of Conservation Florida’s Executive Committee, we’d like to share how deeply grateful we are for the opportunity to serve this remarkable organization.

Thank you to those who have supported the rapid growth of this organization and for those who will continue to support its admirable mission into the future.

Each member of the board has made Conservation Florida their charity of choice. As the state’s most successful land conservancy, Conservation Florida works with donors, landowners, and agencies to protect properties that are at risk of being lost. This organization is saving our special places – for nature and people alike.

Conservation Florida is the lead organization securing habitats in the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Serving as volunteers on the board gives us a chance to see how the passionate staff gets things done. They work diligently to save Florida’s natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

We are proud to say that 100% of our board members donate to support Conservation Florida’s mission, allowing the staff flexibility to direct the funds to where they are needed most. We encourage others to give generously as well. Prioritizing conservation now will help counter the loss of biodiversity and make our state more resilient in the face of extreme weather events. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to many more conservation victories in the months and years ahead.

Conservation Florida’s Board of Directors, Executive Committee



Matt Pearce
Chair of the Board



Courtney Barnard
Vice Chair of the Board



Justin Beck
Treasurer



Eric Draper
Secretary of the Board

Championing Conservation:

Advocating for Wild Florida



@connorhowe

Whether it's in Florida's state capital or at the local level, Conservation Florida is always generating vibrant buzz of advocacy and awareness for protecting wild Florida. Conservation Florida is on the front lines to protect Florida's natural treasures, and our advocacy in Tallahassee has been impactful.

Light the Capitol Green: To ignite awareness for conservation issues, we embarked on a remarkable initiative known as "Light the Capitol Green." This annual effort transforms Florida's iconic Old Capitol building into a beacon of green light, symbolizing Conservation Florida's commitment to safeguarding the state's unique ecosystems. The Old Capitol's radiant glow serves as a reminder that the voice of Florida's wildlands and waters is heard in Tallahassee.

Wild Florida Legislative Gathering: We host the "Wild Florida Reception," where we bring together policymakers, environmental leaders, and concerned citizens to discuss pressing conservation issues. This gathering serves as a celebration to elevate land conservation, the Florida Wildlife Corridor vision, and honor those policy leaders who ensure support from the state.


CEO's Appointment to the Greenways and Trails Council: We're proud to announce that our CEO has been appointed to Florida's Greenways and Trails Council. This esteemed position places us at the forefront of shaping policies that promote the development of corridors, greenways, and trails across Florida. These pathways not only provide recreational opportunities but also connect communities and protect vital natural corridors.

Support for Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands Protection Programs:

Our team tirelessly advocates for two pivotal programs in Florida: the Florida Department of Environment Protection's Florida Forever Program and the Florida Department of Agriculture's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. These programs play a critical role in conserving natural lands, preserving our state's agricultural heritage, and ensuring a sustainable future for all Floridians.



Through strategic partnerships, advocacy efforts, and unwavering dedication, our organization continues to make a profound impact in Tallahassee. **We believe that by working collaboratively with policymakers, fellow conservation organizations, and the public, we can secure a brighter, greener future for Florida – one where our natural treasures are protected, cherished, and enjoyed by generations to come.**

Together, we are the stewards of Florida's ecological heritage, and our advocacy efforts in Tallahassee are a testament to our commitment to this noble cause. As we move forward, we invite you to join us in this inspiring journey toward a more sustainable and harmonious Florida. 



Carlton Ward, Jr., Wildpath

Conservation Wins

Thanks to *Your* Support!

BELLINI PRESERVE, 605 acres

Six hundred and five acres of beautiful Lake Marion waterfront property, which was once on the verge of being bulldozed for more than 450 multifamily units, is now safe and sound forever.

Joined with six dedicated conservation partners, including conservation buyer Arnie Bellini, Polk County Natural Lands, and the Department of Defense, we fought to conserve this key piece of the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

The property – **one of the last pieces of unprotected Florida scrub in Polk County and a critical linkage in the Florida Wildlife Corridor** – sits right on the water’s edge of Lake Marion and boasts three-and-a-half miles of shoreline, which means significant water impacts for the Northern Everglades if it were to be lost to development.

The incredible property is now an environmental park for public use and recreation – forever protected.

ARBUCKLE CREEK RANCH, 1,250 acres

This Highlands County property is a major connector piece in the Florida Wildlife Corridor. We knew it *had* to be protected. More, it’s adjacent to the Avon Park Air Force Range and its protection supports our military readiness.

At a time when Florida is facing intense development pressures, ranchlands are sought after for conversion into large housing developments and planned communities. Conservation Florida has made ranchlands in the Northern Everglades a top protection priority within its Headwaters to Okeechobee regional land and water conservation initiative.

Arbuckle Creek Ranch is a family-run, cow-calf operation. It is also home to an endangered cutthroat grass community – a species limited to just five Florida counties. Florida panthers have also been documented on this wild ranch. Thanks to you, and our partners at the USDA NRCS and the Department of Defense, this property is now permanently protected.



GISSY RAINBOW RIVER RANCH, 135 acres

This landmark conservation acquisition ensures that the largest last, undeveloped piece of land along the Rainbow River stays this way – forever.

This property does it all; protects water, wildlife, and scenic views along the river, and serves as a critical connecting piece of the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

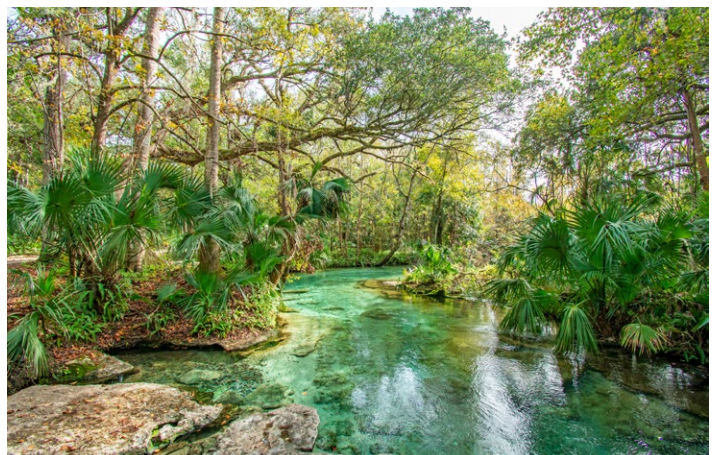
We are so proud to have worked with Mr. Gissy and the Department of Environmental Protection to bring this property into conservation.

Rainbow River is one of the largest spring runs in the world and is a designated National Natural Landmark, an aquatic preserve, and an Outstanding Florida Waterway.

Initially, Jim Gissy, landowner of Gissy Rainbow River Ranch, explored the idea of building an eco-friendly resort on his riverfront property. An outpouring of community support and advocacy to keep the beloved land wild and undeveloped inspired Gissy to seek conservation alternatives instead with Conservation Florida.

“We are so pleased to have conserved this special property and the scenic views it provides to those enjoying the Rainbow River,” said Gissy. “The property will never be a subdivision or a shopping center. It will always be family land with no more than two more private homes and barns.”

While there are acres and acres of wild Florida still left to save, we have plenty of wins worth celebrating. Here at Conservation Florida, 2023 was a big year for us!



continued on next page

Conservation Wins – Thanks to *Your* Support!

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ROLE TRAN, 2,526 acres

Located in the Northern Everglades, the 2,526-acre Role Tran property is not only a working cattle ranch, but it is also adding to the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Thanks to a partnership between Conservation Florida, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Department of Defense, it is also now forever conserved.

“Our family is proud to contribute to the conservation of Florida’s wild and working agricultural lands, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor,” said Lee Lightsey, partner and owner of Role Tran.

Through the permanent protection of Role Tran, a significant dry prairie has also been conserved, which is critical in the long-term protection of the native natural community and the accompanying species that call it home. The protection of this landscape allows for the management of thousands of acres that serve as habitats for at-risk wildlife such as gopher tortoises, which are considered threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

D RANCH PRESERVE, 476 acres

Safeguarded in Osteen, Florida, nestled within a historically rural area, and bordering the Lake Monroe Conservation Area, this once-operational ranch has undergone a remarkable transformation into a wildlife sanctuary.

Within D Ranch Preserve, you’ll find a mix of different habitats. These include critical Florida scrub habitat, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, and depression marsh.

From the colorful coral snake to the iconic gopher tortoise, and from the adorable Florida mouse to the majestic wood stork and Florida black bear, our preserve is home to a diverse range of plant and animal life.

You might even spot rare and beautiful flowers like the pine lily and sky-blue lupine. While the preserve is not currently open to the public, we do host several public events throughout the year. Our team at Conservation Florida loves welcoming visitors for Wild Walks, Bioblitzes, and other exciting events. Stay tuned for updates on when you can join us to explore the wonders of D Ranch Preserve. 🐦



Thank you to each of our protection partners – our landowners, supporters, volunteers, and fellow conservationists – for joining us in our efforts to continue protecting the beautiful wild and working lands like these. There’s much work to be done, but there’s been much accomplished.



Carlton Ward, Jr., Courtesy of Bergeron Everglades Foundation

On the Path to Protection

Florida's vibrant lands are a symphony of colors, wildlife, and unspoiled beauty. Conservation Florida works as your conservation partner to secure protection for its current portfolio of more than 100,000 acres of wild Florida. **These three projects, Eagle Haven Ranch, AP Ranch, and Green Glades West,** are just a few of the shining examples of remarkable projects that you are supporting – and each of them is on the path to protection!

EAGLE HAVEN RANCH: POLK COUNTY

More than 2,900 acres and 4+ miles of water frontage on Lake Kissimmee, Eagle Haven Ranch is home to 300-year-old oaks, 200 species of birds, and absolute Old Florida beauty. It ties into a network of protected lands that stretch south to Lake Okeechobee. In addition to frontage on Lake Kissimmee, Eagle Haven also borders Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes WMA, and Polk County Park's Coleman Landing. Eagle Haven is truly that – a haven for our country's national symbol. Eleven nesting bald eagle mates call this property home.

AP RANCH: HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Towering longleaf pines, native Florida wiregrass, and a mosaic of habitats supporting Florida's threatened and endangered wildlife like the Florida panther and the Florida gopher tortoise, AP Ranch in Highlands County is a 1,000-acre working cattle ranch that is full of life. The landowner often shares images of Florida black bear cubs playing on the property!

GREEN GLADES WEST: HENDRY COUNTY

When you say Everglades, chances are the image you're conjuring up is everything that is found on the Green Glades West property. Five thousand acres set within the heart of the Florida Everglades, the property is a unique and important piece of the Florida Wildlife Corridor that provides habitat to endangered plants and wildlife. The Florida panther and the Florida black bear are often found on-site. In addition to the wildlife this property supports, protection of pristine parcels like Green Glades West is beneficial for clean drinking water, protection of Florida's communities during hurricanes and floods, and more. 🐦



Every drop of water and acre saved helps secure Florida's Conservation Future.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL IN THE MISSION TO KEEP FLORIDA WILDLY BEAUTIFUL

Join Conservation Florida on the front lines. Give today!

Call (352) 376-4770 for more information or email info@conservationfla.org.



@tessa.skiles

Meet Us Outside

Connecting People with Nature

Only small pockets of Old Florida have remained truly untouched over the years, and the urgency to protect our state’s irreplaceable wild and agricultural lands has only grown. Conservation Florida is ramping up its pace, now leading conservation projects on more than 100,000 acres statewide.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND WILD FLORIDA?

Odds are it’s closer than you think. You may find pieces of Florida’s natural heritage – from flocks of songbirds to tangles of ancient Spanish moss – **right in your backyard.**



@tessa.skiles

A CONSERVATION FLORIDA BIOBLITZ!

Our immersive explorations of wild Florida surround you with Florida’s one-of-a-kind ecosystems and help Floridians learn about the important role land conservation plays in its protection. You’ll find, identify, and record all the plants, animals, microbes, fungi, and other organisms that live within a specified area. It’s essentially a snapshot of the biodiversity found in your area!

10,500+
participants

119,500+
observations made

8,000
species spotted



EARTH DAY

Thank you to our volunteers for showing love to our D Ranch Preserve – your preserve – on Earth Day! Nine volunteers from Audacy helped us reduce, reuse, and recycle before heading out on a hike to identify plants and wildlife on the preserve.

KEEP IT CLEAN

University of Central Florida students joined us to clean up D Ranch Preserve, collecting trash from historic dumping areas along the property's roadways, within wooded areas, and scattered along pastures.

An entire 20-yard dumpster was filled with garbage! How many pounds of trash do you think that is? 🐦



We Ran Wild

Adventurers, nature enthusiasts, and runners from across Florida gathered for our third annual Wild Florida 5K. This year's race was an absolute blast, with more than 400 participants coming together to raise over \$30,000 in support of Conservation Florida's vital land conservation efforts!

The excitement was palpable as runners and walkers alike assembled at the starting line on a crisp Saturday morning at Lake Baldwin Park. The 3.1-mile course hugged the serene shores of Lake Baldwin, offering a breathtaking backdrop that reminded us all why we willingly sacrificed that Saturday morning snooze – to protect and preserve the untamed beauty of Florida.

Our spirited participants conquered the course with determination, whether they joined us in person or virtually. Even if you couldn't make it to Orlando for the event, you could still make an impact by signing up to run from your own neighborhood or park. Virtual runner registrations also supported fundraising efforts. **To all our runners, donors, and sponsors, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for making our third annual Wild Florida 5K a roaring success!**



Now, as we catch our breath and celebrate all those who participated, we can't help but look ahead with eager anticipation. Clear your calendars because we can't wait to do it all over again next year! Join us for a heart-pounding race around the track and be a part of the Wild Florida 5K adventure.

Together, we'll continue to protect and celebrate the wild wonders of Florida's natural landscapes.

Don't miss your chance to be a part of the wild and wonderful experience. Stay tuned for updates on next year's Wild Florida 5K and prepare to lace up your running shoes for an unforgettable journey that supports **wild Florida!** 🦉



PROTECT
OUR
PARADISE
PRESENTED BY
CONSERVATION
FLORIDA



Lights, Camera,

“Protect Our Paradise”

We sailed across TV screens with “Protect Our Paradise,” an exciting original docuseries, exploring Florida’s wild, wonderful places. The six-episode docuseries, a joint venture of Crawford Entertainment and Conservation Florida, examined the environmental issues that threaten the Florida we know and love.

“Protecting Florida’s land and water is what will keep Florida, **Florida**,” said Traci Deen, president and CEO of Conservation Florida. “Protect Our Paradise” brings awareness to the places we love and conveys the urgency that these places need to survive. Our viewers’ responses to these stories will write Florida’s next chapter.”



The series, which premiered in July 2023, examined the obstacles confronting Florida and acted as a driving force for promoting conservation across the entire state. Every episode showcased a distinctive facet of Florida’s environment and highlighted individuals dedicated to safeguarding its wildlife, untamed landscapes, and pristine waters.

This series was made possible thanks to a generous grant provided by Lauren and Arnie Bellini.



Our Corridor: This episode focuses on the hidden wonders and current challenges of the 18 million-acre Florida Wildlife Corridor and the incredible efforts toward its conservation.



Our Water: This episode focuses on the magic of Florida’s bodies of water and the unprecedented efforts toward water quality and conservation that are shaping our future.



Our Land: This episode focuses on Florida’s land and how it’s being used, saved, and changed.



Our Growth: This episode focuses on growth in the Sunshine State and how its impact is changing wild Florida.



Our Coasts: This episode focuses on the majesty of the coasts of Florida and the flora and fauna they provide habitat to.



Our Wildlife: This episode focuses on Florida’s wildlife, including native and endangered species, and the strides to save their habitats and prevent their extinction.

Scan to watch
“Protect Our Paradise”



Floridians Forever

Every act of giving has its story – what’s yours?



On giving a legacy gift to Conservation Florida...

“We chose to **leave a legacy** with Conservation Florida because we truly share the same values. We appreciate the work Conservation Florida does in approaching conservation based on **science, collaboration, and education.**”

Florida is so **special**, and we want to protect those **special places.** We are happy to leave behind a legacy of wild Florida for future generations to enjoy – just like we do.”

– Jennifer Prendergast

On being a brand that saves land

“Conservation Florida’s mission directly lines up with everything our artwork and branding speak to at Freehand Goods. We spread the love for the Florida lifestyle, wildlife, and nature through physical products like apparel, stickers, handmade goods, and more, while Conservation Florida spreads that same love and appreciation by protecting the wild and agricultural lands that make Florida, Florida!”

– Jacob Zepf, Freehand Goods



Interested in protecting your land?

@adamstrangbass

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE'S CAMERA TO FIND OUT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED.



SCAN TO START SAVING YOUR LAND!

CONSERVATION FLORIDA

37 N. Orange Ave., Ste. 323
Orlando, FL 32801



**SCAN THIS CODE WITH
YOUR SMARTPHONE'S
CAMERA TO DONATE**



Saving the Places Floridians Love

ON THE COVER

The front cover photograph was shot by Tessa Skiles, @tessa.skiles, while on-site with Team Conservation Florida. As the sun was setting on Big Cypress National Preserve, Skiles was struck by something everyone else missed – a small, delicate piece of beauty, perched carefully. Its wings were lit up like fire from the blazing sun. Off it flew – wild.