



Friends of St. Sebastian River

P.O. Box 284 ❖ Roseland, Florida 32957-0284

March 2016

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The mission of the Friends of St. Sebastian River is to maintain and improve the health and beauty of the St. Sebastian River and its watershed.

THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Dr. Duane De Freese, Executive Director of Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program and the recently formed Indian River Lagoon Council, will give a presentation at our General Meeting this month, on the efforts to restore the Indian River Lagoon.

The Indian River Lagoon has suffered a significant decline in its ecosystem health over the last several years, resulting in major algae blooms. The northern part of the Lagoon is once again being affected by a “brown tide” this season, and a State of Emergency has been declared by the Governor as a result of unprecedented water releases from Lake Okeechobee in the southern Lagoon. Are we learning any lessons from these catastrophic events and how can we save the ecosystem? These are the topics Dr. De Freese will help us understand when he joins us on March 22nd.

For over three decades, Dr. De Freese has been a champion of science-based, common-sense ocean and coastal conservation in Florida. He is recognized for his ability to “see and communicate the big picture” by integrating environmental, economic and social considerations into a vision for Florida’s future.

Duane was instrumental in helping secure U.S. EPA National Estuary Program designation for the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) in 1990. In September 2015, his career came full circle when he was named Executive Director of a new special district in the state of Florida (Indian River Lagoon Council) that will serve as the host of a reorganized IRL National Estuary Program. In this new role, Duane is working with federal, state and local government agencies, scientific research organizations, academic institutions, elected officials, industry and the general public. The goal is to develop a restoration strategy for one of the nation’s most threatened estuarine ecosystems.

Our meeting is **Tuesday March 22nd, 7:30 pm** at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd in Sebastian. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

April is Water Conservation Month – learn more at
<http://floridaswater.com/waterconservation/savingwater>

2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

The election for this year's Board of Directors was held at our January annual meeting. Incumbent members Tom Bauer, Jane Schnee, and Lynn Stieglitz were re-elected, along with new Board member Mark Bondy. Congratulations and welcome to Mark – we appreciate your help and dedication on behalf of all our members, and our River.

As per our bylaws, Officers are selected by the Board at our February Directors' meeting. There was no change in Officers, so we all continue in office as before.

The only other administrative change for our group is that we've added a committee to work on invasive plant issues. Jane and Mark are serving on that committee and we look forward to some hands-on work in the near future. If you live on the River, you can expect to hear from us, as we get more involved in surveying where problems exist. If you know there are issues with Brazilian pepper or other invasive species on your property, feel free to let us know. You will find contact information in this newsletter and on our website.

STATEWIDE MANATEE COUNT STABLE

This year's count of 6,250 manatees is similar to last year's count of 6,063. Both years had very good survey conditions and 2015 and 2016 are the only two years on record for which the count has exceeded 6,000 individuals.

Aerial surveys are conducted annually, weather permitting, to provide researchers with a count of manatees visible in Florida waters at the time of the survey. Through this effort, researchers know there are at least 6,250 manatees in Florida waters. In addition to the number of manatees counted, these surveys also provide researchers information on species distribution and habitat use.

Information obtained by the survey informs management decisions and enables wildlife and resource managers to better understand and conserve Florida's state marine mammal.

For more information on manatees, surveys, and more about their research, visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at <http://myfwc.com/research/manatee>.

Manatee deaths from boats were up in 2015, over the previous year. The number of watercraft-related deaths was the highest since 2011, but less than the record set in 2009. The number of manatee deaths for 2015 overall, was also up over 2014.

In some areas of Florida, there are seasonal changes in manatee protection zone boat speeds beginning April 1. In our area, the St. Sebastian River is a year-round slow speed zone. For information on manatee protection zones and maps of boat speed regulations, visit the FWC at <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/manatee/protection-zones>.

Source: Florida FWC e-newsletter, February 25, 2016

HOOKED A BIRD?

Have you accidentally hooked a bird while fishing? "The first thing to know is don't cut the line," said Kevin Oxenrider, a biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). "Birds that fly away with hook and line attached are at risk of getting entangled in trees and dying. And that line is left to possibly snare other wildlife."

The FWC has come out with these steps to rescue a hooked bird: Reel in the bird. Remove the hook. Release the bird.

"Many people are afraid to grab a large bird like a pelican, but there's a way to do it without

hurting the bird or the rescuer,” Oxenrider explained. For full details on how to remove fish hooks from birds, visit the FWC at www.MyFWC.com/unhook. On their site you will also find a downloadable brochure with detailed instructions on how to remove a hook from pelicans. The brochure was developed by the Pelican Island Audubon Society and is now distributed throughout the state by the FWC and Audubon of Florida.

ANACONDAS FOUND IN BREVARD COUNTY

Two green anacondas were found recently in Brevard County, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) wants your help in learning more about them.

On Feb. 3, an 8-foot, 8-inch green anaconda was turned over to FWC officials after its capture in Brevard County. The snake was collected in a Melbourne neighborhood called Oxford Ridge. The nonnative snake was euthanized and turned over to biologists for research regarding reproductive status, overall health and gut content. An examination lead investigators to believe the snake was privately owned. The snake did not have a PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag as required by state law for this species.

Late last year another anaconda was found in Brevard County and was not PIT tagged either.

Green anacondas are considered to be the largest snake in the world, and make their home in northern South America. Female snakes can reach 26 feet and can feed on medium- and large-sized prey.

The FWC asks that you call their Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922 with information about this or any other wildlife emergency. We have also report previously in our newsletter on the “IveGot1” smartphone app developed by the Everglades National Park and the University of Georgia, to help identify and report both invasive plants and animals. For more information, visit

www.nps.gov/ever/learn/news/ivegot1mobileapppr112911.htm

YARD SALE

Our yard sale this year was one of our most successful ever! Thanks to all the volunteers who helped out, and a special thank you to About Storage for assisting with storage space for donations, and venue for the sale. It’s not too soon to start collecting those treasures for next year – we’ve already found our first few donations.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday, March 18, 9 AM
**St. Sebastian River
Boat Excursion**

Environmental Learning
Center

Fee/reservations required
info: 772-589-5050 or
www.discoverelc.org



Monday, March 21, 7:30 PM
**Exploring the In-water Life
of Sea Turtles**

**Cody Mott, Inwater
Research Group**

Pelican Island Audubon
Vero Beach Community
Center

2266 14th Ave., Vero Beach
info:

www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 PM
**The Indian River Lagoon
National Estuary**

**Program:
New Opportunities for
Ecosystem Restoration
Dr. Duane De Freese, Indian
River Lagoon Council
FSSR**

North IRC Library
1001 Sebastian Blvd.

info: www.fssr.org or
772-202-0501

Please visit the “Meeting Info/
Events” page of our website
for more events!

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NOTE: The date on your mailing label is the month/year when your dues are next due. Thank you.

APPLICATION FORM

The Friends of St. Sebastian River depends on member support for programs of conservation and education.

Youth (under 18) free — Individual \$10/year

Family \$15/year — Corporate \$50/year

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Special interests, concerns or expertise: _____

Please mail your completed application and dues to:
P.O. Box 284, Roseland, Florida 32957-0284

This newsletter is available on our website and delivery by email for current members. We encourage email-only delivery to save funds and paper! Email us at the address on the front to request email delivery.

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Vice President Buzz Herrmann
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