

Footprints

www.fkwbc.org



SUMMER 2010



Photo: Egret in Flight by Robert Gintel

FLORIDA KEYS WILD BIRD CENTER NEWSLETTER • 93600 OVERSEAS HWY • TAVERNIER, FL • 33070

Bird Spotlight

GREAT EGRET

This sleek snow-white wader was nearly hunted to extinction by Plume hunters until the early 1900's as Ladies thought it fashionable to adorn their hats with their flowing nuptial plumes. Thanks to laws protecting egrets and other plume birds, by World War I, breeding plumes on women's hats had all but disappeared.

It is 37-41 inches in length with a stout yellow bill and black legs. It has long, lacy plumes during breeding season. It feeds on insects, frogs, water snakes and fish and makes its home in marshes, lakes, lagoons, wooded swamps and streams.

Laura's corner

At 82 years of age and not enjoying the best of health, I have reluctantly come to realize that the time has come for me to step down from active management of the bird sanctuary which I started 24 years ago, and to which I devoted a good part of my life and most all of my financial resources. It was not an easy decision to make nor accept, yet I recognize that it is in the best interest of all our loyal supporters, our hard working and devoted staff, and our resident flocks whose health we care for and love so dearly. Therefore I have made a decision to sell my ownership in my home and its surrounding property to the Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center, after paying off the encumbering mortgage, where, as my legacy, it could remain in perpetuity for the benefit of the entire Upper Florida Keys community.

For me, the burden of maintaining and operating the premises, dealing with the pressures of changing economic conditions, and constant threats of financial insolvency will be lifted and assumed by others. I truly believe that the center,

having survived many challenges, is now in good hands and on a path towards a better future.

Under the contractual arrangements fairly arrived at, I shall be spending my remaining years in my home on the premises with "Princeton" my favorite four-legged companion, and surrounded by our resident bird flocks who bring so much pleasure and joy to myself and to the 14,000 eco-tourists and locals who come each year to observe and photograph them. Nevertheless, don't be surprised if you see me popping-in from time to time sharing with our visitors my knowledge and love of our feathered friends.

Our Center and its facilities are still offered free of charge to any and all interested parties and therefore, it still needs your continued financial support.

I know times are tough but I ask you from the bottom of my heart to please make a donation to help the new management meet its goals and objectives. Many of you have been long-term contributors and your continuing support is vital. Without it, this Bird Center will not be able to carry on its important work.



From the Chairman's perch

Let's review the past six months since our new Board took over the reorganization of the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center last November 23, 2009 and then discuss our plans for the future.

- An influx of donations, from contributors both large and small, helped avert a financial crisis. Now, all our suppliers have been paid in full and all accounts payable have been current since the beginning of this year. We are free from all and any indebtedness.

- Although donations received have matched our expenses, we have not been able to build up a cushion of cash with which to meet future needs comfortably and therefore meeting weekly payrolls and future operating needs is still very challenging.

- We have been fortunate to find and employ two experienced bird rehabilitators, Vered Nograd and Virginia Bowen, and to lease two nearby buildings in which to employ and house them. With their help, and the help of new crews that feed our birds, we have been compliant with all pertinent federal and state regulations governing our activity.

- Cleanliness, sanitary conditions, and visitor's safety have improved considerably in our facility and the release rate of injured birds that have come under our care and returned back to their wild, natural habitat has increased to 62%. We have cared for approximately 500 birds that have been rescued in the months from January to June 2010 and on an annual basis, we have provided a most enjoyable viewing experience to approximately 14,000 visitors.

- We upgraded our computers, software programs and our website thanks to the help of David Morrow at OrbusNeich in Fort Lauderdale, FL. We encourage you to visit our website regularly at www.fkwbc.org to keep posted on future

events as they occur, such as the evolving oil spill crisis. By registering on Facebook through our website, you will be able to read interesting stories about our bird rescues. Furthermore, by signing to receive our "Footprints" newsletter electronically you will not only get this publication more quickly but also save us postage.

- We have participated in a number of neighborhood events and outreach programs, that have helped rebuild reputation and awareness.

- Subsequent to our previous newsletter, we completed a successful fundraising event, thanks to the generosity of the Miami Acting Company and the work of newly appointed board member John Stuart. We raised \$11,145 of which \$5,825 came from the sale of tickets to a performance of Mel Brooks musical, "The Producer's", presented at the Murray Nelson Government Center theater in Key Largo, Florida, and \$5,320 from a silent auction.

Looking to the longer term, your board has commenced a three-phase development program. When successfully completed, it will place the ownership of the Wild Bird Center in the hands of the FKWBC itself, while paying off the encumbering reverse mortgage on the property. Then, we plan a building program of repair, restoration, and modernization designed to establish a wild bird medical facility and sanctuary second to none. Finally, we hope to create an endowment fund whose investment income will reduce the constant need to solicit charitable contributions and emergency fund appeals from our neighbors and benefactors.

- **Phase 1.** The purchase of the property and elimination of the encumbering mortgage has just been completed by virtue of a \$750,000 donation to the Wild Bird Center from the Gintel Family Foundation.



FLORIDA KEYS WILD BIRD CENTER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Robert Gintel - *Co-Chairman and President*

John Stuart - *Co-Chairman and Vice President*

Jack Curlett

Tracy Webb Widener

Russell A. Yagel

Terry Timberlake

Luise Johnson

Joan C. Scholz

• **Phase 2.** Funding for a \$750,000 matching donation for a capital improvement program, aptly named the **Phoenix Project** after the mythological bird that rose from its own ashes is presently being undertaken by the *Ocean Reef Foundation*, www.orfound.org.

• **Phase 3.** As mentioned above, we are planning an endowment fund to lessen dependence on constant emergency fund raising appeals....a long-term project which we have not yet initiated.

As you can see from the above, we have come a long way in the last six months and have reached a point where we can plan for the future, rather than just worrying about how we can survive today. Unfortunately, we are in the midst of an unfolding ecological crisis in our very own neighborhood. We are trying to stay on top of breaking news, while keeping our friends and neighbors apprised of what they can do to help, if and when needed.

Seeing that Laura Quinn is retiring, all of us need to acknowledge her tremendous contribution, unflagging dedication, and hard work as a true pioneer in rehabilitating and caring for sick and injured birds. In honor of this quintessential "Bird Lady"

as she has been lovingly described, we intend to rename the Visitors Center, the

Laura Quinn Wild Bird Sanctuary.

As a final note, I would like to welcome Luise Johnson and Jack Curlett who recently joined our Board of Directors and who I know will make an important contribution to our future success. I would like also to thank retiring Board member, Barbara Pareira, for her dedication and past service in recent months during some rather challenging times.

Recently Board member John Stuart accepted my invitation to become Co-Chairman of our Board of Directors. As Chief Operating Officer of the Florida Keys Electric Cooperative and a recent President of the Key Largo Rotary Club, he brings a wealth of local business and philanthropic experience to the table.

If, as we hope, you will contribute to the **Phoenix Project** mentioned above, please contact Florida Keys Wild Bird Center at **305-852-4486** for further information and details. This project is absolutely essential to our future and we can use all the help we can get.



Preparing for the oil spill



By VERED NOGRAD, Wild Bird Center Hospital Director

Our fragile ecosystem and native wildlife species are now facing a potentially devastating situation. The Florida Keys (located downstream from the Gulf of Mexico) lie where some reports are now suggesting the possibility that oil will reach our coast. However since we are dealing with wind and weather related uncertainties of Mother Nature, unless the oil actually reaches the Loop current in the Gulf, there is no way to accurately predict its eventual course.

When a disaster of this magnitude occurs, the response is usually a federal multi-agency effort. The Florida Keys Wild Bird Center greatly appreciates the calls we are getting from concerned citizens wishing to help. At this time, all of us must go through the most difficult part of any concerted effort to save our animals. We must be patient and allow the professionals to lead the way.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov) is currently working with Tri-State Birds & Rescue Research (www.tristatebird.org) to coordinate all facets of oil spill responses, including wildlife rescue efforts. Tri-State is

an organization well known throughout the world to have a tremendous amount of experience dealing with all spills, oiled wildlife rescue, and treatment response since 1976. At this time they have established washing stations in the areas that are in immediate danger, and their infrastructure will progress to other areas and states as quickly as needed.

The Florida Keys Wild Bird Center is preparing for the worst scenario, while praying for the best possible outcome. We are a well-established facility with over two decades of experience whose mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and release sick orphaned and injured native wildlife species. We are ready to do whatever is necessary to fulfill that mission during this crisis. FKWBC has experienced staff on call 24/7 ready to assist the leading agencies if we are needed. We are aware that, if this happens, it will be a costly endeavor, and we will certainly need and appreciate the help of the community to assist with the added financial burden. Tri-State and all other federal agencies are asking the public as well as all other wildlife rehabilitation facilities to stand by and await further instructions, which is what we are currently doing at FKWBC.

continued...

cont...

Tri-State has established hotlines to assist the public as follows: to report oiled wildlife, please call 1-866-557-1401 and leave a message - messages are checked hourly; to report oil spill related damage, please call 1-800-440-0858; to report oiled shoreline or to request volunteer information, please call 1-866-448-5816.

Once again, we we greatly appreciate the immense outpouring of concern and support. It is precisely this kind of support that helps us continue our endeavors to keep our native birds flying and their environment thriving and safe.

Many Thanks! 🦅

We would like to acknowledge among others the following people and organizations who have so generously donated goods or services to help our cause:

Hal Heim, Rich and Rachel Peine, Sons and Daughter's of Italy, Snapper's, Richard and Debra Ginsberg, Miami Acting Company, Jenny Rae, Lee Oulette, Russ Yagel, Bob Smith, Luise Johnson, Howard Sanders, Atlantic Trash, Gilbert's, Shiloh Tires, George Parker, David Ritz , DJ Dave - Clear Channel Radio Show Host, Steve Gibbs, Fish House and Encore, Sheila Konczewski and our Quarter's largest Donor: Mary Pierse



Photo: Egret by Tom Dailey



KEEP THEM FLYING!

Florida Keys Wild Bird Center
93600 Overseas Hwy,
Tavernier, FL 33070
www.fkwbc.org
info@fkwbc.org
(305) 852 - 4486

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
Paid
Tavernier, FL 33070
Permit No. 23