



# Gator Gazette

DECEMBER



## Goodbye to 2024

It's been another great year in Solivita, during which our club has grown by about 80%. Our commitment to our wildlife, ecology, and environment remains steadfast, growing in intensity and commitment as we work harder each year to protect that which we love.

We kept busy this year with meetings, social outings, visiting speakers and an occasional potluck dinner. By year's end we will be introducing an all new website. In the past only the Veteran's Club of Solivita has achieved it's own website. Now — the SWA!



We re-elected our Board of Directors, worked with the HOA and the PCDD on feral hogs, supported the state's legislation to protect another 28,000 acres, celebrated Earth Day, worked with Florida Wildlife Commission officials and the community management to protect residents from intruder bears and developed a plan to build and donate a wild-life information kiosk to the community.

Yes, it was a busy year. But one that we so enjoyed working together on a mission that is near and dear to our hearts — WILDLIFE PROTECTION. We trust you agree.

## A Very American Christmas Wish

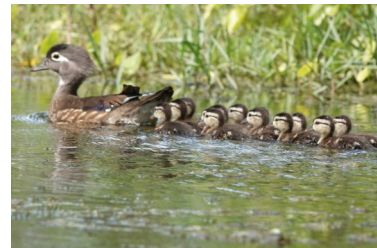
As all SWA members know, our club was formed to protect Solivita's alligators. Since its inception that mission has broadened its focus to include all of our wildlife. But we remain committed to caring about the slithery creature that has been made out to be a monster. Although we are sad to have lost three gators this year, we are also encouraged that the count has fallen from its previous average of fifteen. And so we remain committed to protecting these amphibians, and thank your for being an active part of the mission. Merry Christmas!



# PHOTOS AT THIS YEAR'S EVENTS IN REVIEW

We were busy! Program Director, Barbara McDonald and her partner Vivian Aber kept us out in the world visiting nature sites throughout central Florida. Educational and entertaining is the theme and they delivered in spades.

Our thanks to them for their hard work, and for all of our members who participated. More to come in 2025.



## FALL COLORS IN FLORIDA'S NATURAL LANDSCAPE

REPRINTED FROM FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Florida's fall colors may be subtle, but our native trees and shrubs still put on a seasonal show. Whether you're exploring wooded trails, wetland edges, parks, or your own neighborhood, you can catch glimpses of autumn's hues. With the right space, you might even consider planting one in your yard to enjoy the colors while benefiting local wildlife.



### WHY DO LEAVES CHANGE COLORS?

The bright green of leaves comes from chlorophyll, which helps plants turn sunlight into energy through photosynthesis. As fall arrives and days grow shorter, chlorophyll production slows, allowing the reds, yellows, and purples from other pigments to emerge. The intensity and duration of these colors depend on factors like temperature and moisture.

Here in Florida, with our longer days and warmer nights, the peak fall colors arrive later and are often more subtle than those up north.



## MINUTES FROM OCTOBER CLUB MEETING

Bob Monica called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm at Palms Amenity Room. Board members present: Bob Monica, Leo Mills, Dorothy Schwartz and Barbara McDonald. Bruce Allen was absent as he was caring for his wife, Debbie who recently had surgery.

### TREASURER’S REPORT

- Treasurer Leo Mills gave his report.
  - Membership dues - \$1440.00
  - YTD income - \$3076.09
  - Total club funds YTD - \$5701.44
  - Total YTD expenses - \$2114.57
  - Net club funds - \$3586.87
  - We have 188 members.
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- Minutes of September Meeting were accepted by the group.
  - Future meeting dates are - Holiday Party December 2nd, January 20, 2025 and February 17, 2025. Future dates are always available on the SWA Solivita website page.
  - The gator report for the end of September 2024 indicates no gators has been removed. The annual count remains at a total of three.
  - Program Director, Barbara McDonald, presented a report detailing the social and educational events the club has scheduled in the immediate upcoming months.
  - Bob reviewed the club’s 2025 Annual Plan. The plan includes the inclusion of a new logo which the attending membership voted to adopt. Bob said he hopes that the new website will be ready by January 2025.
  - Bob reviewed the contents of the Bear Safety Presentation that had to be cancelled due to the hurricane.
  - Bob also provided an update on the hog situation.



## FAREWELL TO AN ERA

### SS UNITED STATES

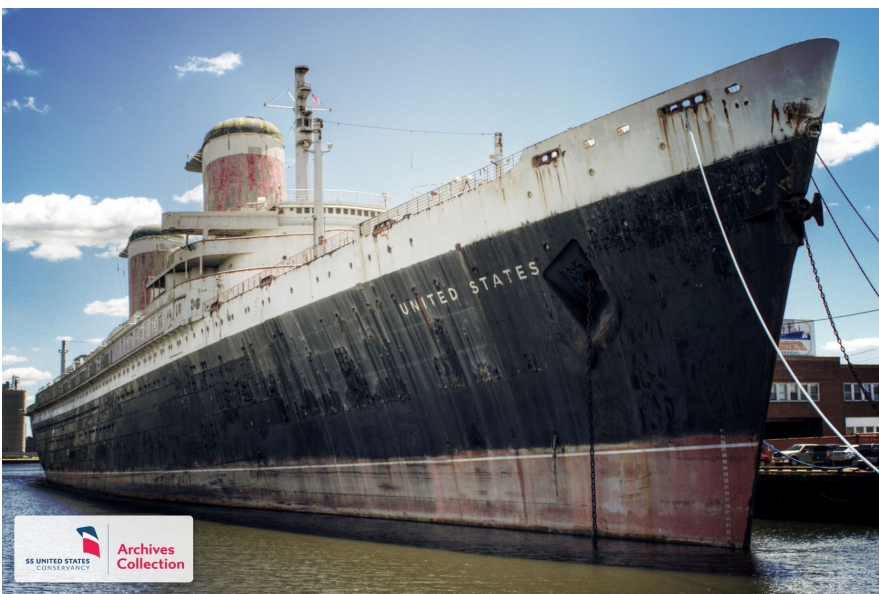
In 1962 I visited St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands. One of the highlights of the trip was standing on a mountaintop looking down into the bay watching the sleek SS United States sail into port. Then one of the most successful ocean-crossing vessels, it gave me great pride to see it side by side with the SS France.



What a great memory.

Today the once proud ship is on a voyage down south, where it will be sunk to serve as an artificial reef off the Florida Gulf Coast. City commissioners in Okaloosa County, Florida, have approved a \$10.1 million plan to relocate the ocean liner and sink it off the coast of Destin-Fort Walton Beach. The plan includes building a \$1 million seaside museum chronicling the cruise liner's history.

Captain Joseph Farrell -- who created the current record-holder for the world's largest artificial reef -- addressed details about the mission, *"This is the best ending for the ship. Serving as an artificial reef, means the United States will live on to nurture generations of marine life,"* he said.



Farrell says crews will check the tides for the best time to begin its journey. He says the SS (steam ship) United States will have to move away from the dock at high tide. It will then need to go under the Walt

Whitman Bridge during low tide. And so we will soon bid a fond farewell to this evocative vessel and the era when overseas transport meant a shipboard journey.

## NOVEMBER'S FEATURED WILDLIFE RESCUE PROVIDER



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Wildlife Inc., has been saving wildlife through rehabilitation and education since 1988. As a beacon of hope for injured and orphaned animals, they work tirelessly to provide care to help injured and sick creatures survive. They receive over 4000 calls each year, standing as the sole rehabilitation facility in their county for birds, mammals, and reptiles across 893 square miles and a population of over 403,000 people.

**WILDLIFE INC IS NOW TEMPORARILY CLOSED DUE TO HURRICANES HELENE AND MILTON. IF YOU WANT TO HELP THEM GET BACK ON THEIR FEET, PLEASE SUPPORT OUR GOFUNDME BY CLICKING BELOW:**

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/gail-ed-straight-of-wildlife-inc>




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ANIMAL QUOTES

“Wherever there are wild animals in the world, there is always an opportunity for caring, compassion and kindness.”

PAUL OXTON



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