



Gator Gazette

solivitawildlife.com



Good News For Gators

Our SWA Club (now four years young) was founded in an effort to protect the alligators of Solivita which, at the time, has historically been trapped and killed at a rate of 15 per year. We immediately went to work educating our fellow residents on the realities of living safely among alligators in Florida. In just one year the number of gators trapped fell to an average of three per year. So in the past three years we have saved 36 alligators.

The great news is that people seem to be getting the message. Gator mating season (March-June) is the busiest time for trappers since the gators are so visible. Usually we lose at least two during the January-March time frame (snow bird season). This year we have had no gators trapped in Solivita during the first quarter. Quite an accomplishment!



But we can't let our guard down. Gators have a habit of showing up in the darndest places, so we have to keep reminding our neighbors and friends to be careful to practice safe alligator



habits and to never panic at the sight of an alligator. Those stories that fill the media a designed to scare you into believing that alligators are monsters who hunt for people to snack on. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only little children and fools believe such foolishness. And it's up to us to set them straight and keep our gators safe.

Just remind folks of all the good gators do to

keep our community free of varmints like snakes, opossums, rodents, turtles and other small mammals. Our goal is a trapping free community where both people and alligators both thrive living

HAPPILY
Ever After



GATORLAND RETURNS TO SOLIVITA — APRIL 2025

Educator extraordinaire, Brett Chisom of Gatorland, returned to the Starlite Ballroom for another presentation focused on the creepy critters of Florida. Brett makes everything wild that walks, swims or slithers interesting and fun. He was met by a large crowd of faithful SWA members, and many other residents, eager to see the wonderful array of creatures he calls friends. And, as usual, he did not disappoint.



FLORIDA'S LARGEST STATE PARK TO PROTECT HOME OF THE ENDANGERED FLORIDA PANTHER

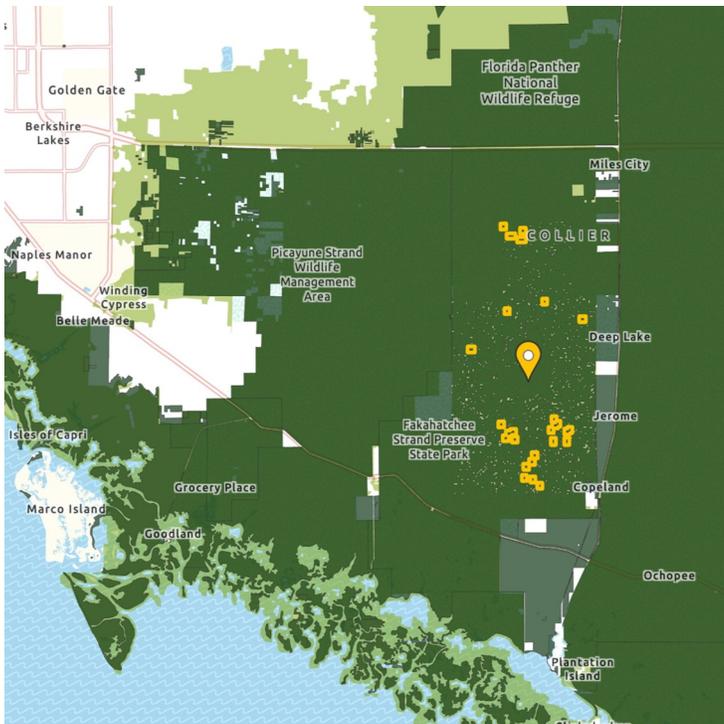
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The Florida panther, one of the world's most endangered mammals, relies on vast, connected landscapes for survival. With only an estimated 120-230 individuals remaining, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), habitat squeeze and fragmentation have contributed to the deaths of 36 panthers in the past year, 29 from vehicle strikes alone.

These 60.27 newly protected acres enhance habitat connectivity within the preserve — which stretches roughly twenty miles long and five miles wide. It provides room to roam, free from dangerous highways and subdivisions. "This is a victory for Florida's wild places and the species that depend on them," said Conservation Florida's James Phillips. "Within moments of stepping onto these newly conserved acres, I came face to face with an endangered Florida panther for the first time in my life. It was a powerful reminder of why this work matters. Every acre we protect strengthens the habitat these incredible species rely on, ensuring that future generations can experience the wild beauty of Florida just as I did in that moment."

These newly conserved acres are home to not only wide roaming mammals like the endangered Florida panther and the beloved black bear, but also a multitude of state-listed endangered species like the cardinal airplant and the ribbon orchid.

"The Fakahatchee Strand is a truly special place," said Conservation Florida CEO Traci Deen. "In one visit alone to the parcels we acquired, our team encountered rare plants and animals we've spent our entire lives wishing to see. It fills us with pride to have helped conserve one of the state's most extraordinary wild places and added to our award-winning state parks system."



Conservation Florida purchased the 17 environmentally sensitive land parcels from Avatar Properties. Once acquired, Conservation Florida partnered with the FDEP's Division of State Lands to facilitate the transfer and acquisition of the properties to the state park system. The state of Florida now owns and manages the 60.27 acres now incorporated into the public park.

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park is remarkable in its biodiversity; it is the only place in the world where bald cypress trees and royal palms share the forest canopy. Additionally, it is considered the "orchid capital of North America," as it is home to 47 native orchid species, most of which are protected.



MINUTES FROM APRIL CLUB MEETING

Vice President, Rick McKelvey called meeting to order at 5:00 pm at Palms. BOD present: Rick McKelvey, Leo Mills, Vivian Aber & Barbara McDonald. Bob Monica, Joanne Bodziony absent.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- Minutes of last meeting were not available. They will be accepted at next month's meeting. We have 220 members.
- Future meeting date is - May 5, 2025. Future dates are available on the SWA website.
- The gator report for the end of March 2025 indicates no gators has been removed.
- Leo Mills, Treasurer gave a review of finances. Cash on hand currently is \$5,418.62.
- Program Director, Barbara McDonald, reported that Taylor Morrison has agreed to cleanup Bird Island and maintain it and surrounding pond area going forward. Upcoming Events: Central Florida Animal Reserve Speaker and fund raiser. No events in July or August. FWC speaker on Bears will be in September.
- The committee is looking into potential field trips to the Audubon Society in Maitland, Elephant Refuge in Gainesville, Pelican Island in Vera Beach and Chase Sanctuary for primates.
- Rick gave a thorough update on work begin accomplished by the PCDD, especially that which is focused on bringing approved Fishing Rules to the Community. This is a complex project involving the development of safety procedures, designated fishing location and regulations. The PCDD is also working on controlling algae on the ponds.
- Meeting ended at 6:00 pm.

Trust for Public Land Helps Protect Upper Shoal River for Community and Conservation

Trust for Public Land (TPL) has announced the Upper Shoal River Project, an effort to protect 2,491 acres of critical riverfront and woodlands along the Shoal River and Gum Creek. This acquisition, will be funded through the Florida Forever program, Atira Conservation, EJK Foundation, and the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, ensures long-term conservation of the river's headwaters while creating new opportunities for recreation and community connection with nature.



The Shoal River is a vital resource for Northwest Florida, supporting local water quality and feeding into the Choctawhatchee Bay. Preserving this segment safeguards clean water, prevents habitat loss, and protects the region's natural resilience. The land's sandhills and steep riverbanks provide a unique landscape where visitors can hike, paddle, camp, and fish while enjoying the scenic beauty of the river corridor.

Recreational opportunities at the park, managed by the Florida Park Service, will boost regional tourism and provide a lasting resource for residents to explore and appreciate their local environment.

The project's conservation value is immense, protecting habitat for rare and listed species like the gopher tortoise and Florida black bear. It also strengthens regional conservation efforts through partnerships with Walton County, Egin Air Force Base, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. These collaborations not only enhance wildlife corridors but also support the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape, which balances environmental stewardship with military readiness.

SWA PLANS A GALA FUNDRAISING EVENT — NEED VOLUNTEERS

Now that the SWA has grown in size and influence in Solivita it’s time to begin a process of providing financial support to local and state organizations that support our mission. Our focus of support will be local rescue and educational entities that provide vital services to the wildlife and the greater Orlando area.

To that end we are beginning to plan a major fundraising event to raise significant sums to donate to a worthy organization. Our intent is to create a fun social event that is allows for fundraising at its core and becomes an ongoing part of the community’s culture. We might do a dinner party, dance party or major wine tasting event. But, whatever the theme we want to fill the ballroom with partygoers that love wildlife and wish to support it — whether SWA club members or not.



We begin by asking our members to volunteer to serve on the steering/planning committee. This will include providing input in the planning process and lead to assisting in it’s execution. We need creative folks, perhaps with experience in party planning, who like to have fun and have the time and energy to commit to the project.

If this sounds like something of interest to you — we would appreciate your dropping a line to swa.solivita@gmail.com. From that we will create a list and invite you to the Kick Off Meeting. We hope to get about 12 people to “share-the-load” and share the fun.

WILDLIFE CHARITY EVENT

WHITESAND FOUNDATION IS ORGANIZING A FUNDRAISING EVENT TO RAISE AWARENESS AND DONATION FOR THOSE IN NEED.

We cordially invite you and your guest to the upcoming charity auction event on the **24th of August, 2024.**

The event will be held at **WHITESAND FOUNDATION**
No. 12 Main Street,
City Center Queenstown

ADMISSION \$40
Tickets include dinner and drinks

Get your tickets www.example.com



MAY'S FEATURED WILDLIFE RESCUE PROVIDER



FLORIDA WILDLIFE HOSPITAL

(321) 254-8843 | 4560 N. US Hwy 1, Palm Shores,

Our Mission

Keeping wildlife wild by providing quality, compassionate care

To support that mission, FWH focuses on:

- Providing quality care through networking, continued education, and medical advancements
 - Releasing only mentally and physically "sound" native Florida wildlife that can positively contribute to the ecosystem in their intended way
 - Acting as the front lines for disease detection, treatment, and prevention
 - Empowering our community through education to protect native Florida wildlife and their natural environment
 - Providing a place to give back through volunteering and donations
 - Providing internships for younger generations ensuring continued success of the wildlife rehabilitation field
- Conducting business in a sustainable and environmentally friendly fashion



MAY 14, 2025
10 AM
STARLITE BALLROOM



DR. K. SIMBA WALTZ
VP, CEO

FREE
FOR ALL SOLIVITA
RESIDENTS

CANCELLED

Central Florida Animal Reserve