



Gator Gazette

solivitawildlife.com

July



Happy Independence Day - 2025!

July marks the unofficial beginning of the second half of the year. It's hard to believe that we are already six months into 2025, as it continues to speed along.

Our efforts with alligator protection continues with success with only one gator having been trapped since January 2025. That's good news, because over the last three years three gators have been taken each year during the first quarter. But we can't let our guard down. As new residents arrive we must continue reinforce the message that we can, and do, live safely with our alligators by

simply leaving them alone, without feeding or harassment. The result is happy gators, safe residents and a continuation of paradise in Solivita.

In other news, the SWA Gala Committee has chosen February 2, 2026 as the date for our first annual fundraising party. Although plans remain fluid, it is trending toward an exciting wine tasting event complete with music, dancing, food and merriment. Most importantly the money raised will go toward a number of not-for-profit wildlife organizations we support, leading with the Central Florida Animal Reserve. Mark you calendar.



Finally, our Program Director, Barbara McDonald is in the process of finalizing plans to bring in an expert from the Florida Wildlife Commission to talk with us about bear safety this fall. We will be sure to be advertising it here and on Facebook, so look for that as it develops.

Have a fulfilled, safe July 4th holiday filled with old fashioned hot dogs, beans, potato salad, and fireworks.

GATORLAND RETURNS TO SOLIVITA — JUNE 2025

Solivita residents take scores of beautiful photos every month of the exotic and active wildlife thriving here at Solivita. some are very impressive — her are recent examples.



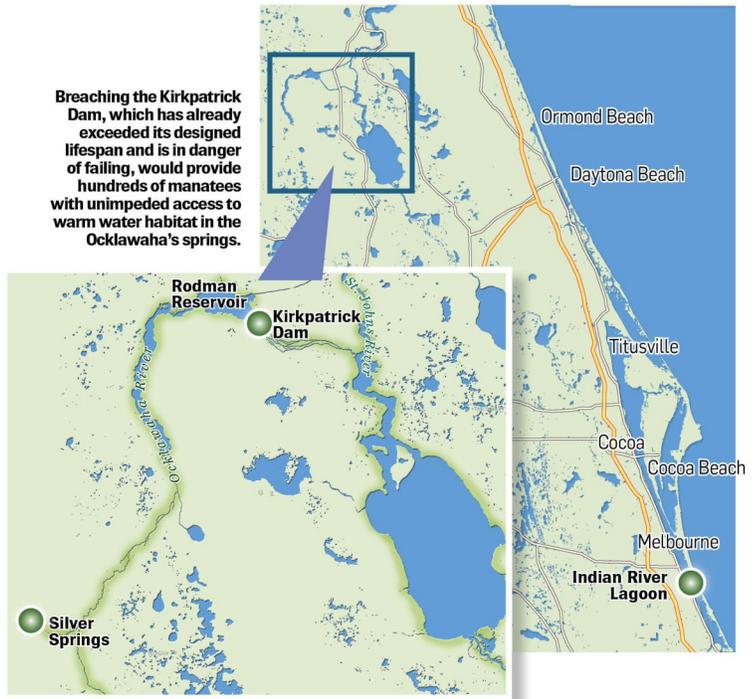
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SOLIVITA WILDLIFE FACEBOOK PAGE - RICK MCKELVEY

DESANTIS TO SIGN 2025/2026 FLORIDA BUDGET INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION FUNDING

The new Florida Annual Budget sits on Ron DeSantis’ desk ready for approval no later than June 30th to take effect on July 1, 2025. The governor is expected to approve the budget, which includes **\$18 million** for land conservation through the Florida Forever program. Our SWA has supported this program of purchasing land for protection and conservation since the inception of our club.

The State Fiscal Year budget also allocates \$150 million to the Department of Environmental Protection for project funding within the Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan. Another major investment in Florida’s environmental future involves the expenditure of \$6.25 million for the restoration of the Ocklawaha River, one of Florida’s most iconic and impacted waterways.

For more than 50 years, the Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam (a remnant of the defunct Cross Florida Barge Canal project) has disrupted the natural flow of the Ocklawaha — submerging floodplain forest areas covering more than 20 springs, and blocking fish and manatee migration. This restoration will help reunite the Great Florida Riverway to benefit four unique ecosystems: the St. Johns River, Silver Springs & River, Ocklawaha River, and the Atlantic Ocean.



Restoring the Ocklawaha River will provide measurable value for Floridians:



- **Improving recreational fishing** by expanding fish habitat and migration.
- **Reconnecting wildlife habitats** within the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- **Reviving freshwater springs**, long hidden beneath the artificial pool’s waters.
- **Expanding outdoor recreation & tourism**, supporting local economies.
- **Restoring manatee habitats** and enhancing biodiversity.



MINUTES FROM JUNE CLUB MEETING

President, Bob Monica called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Present Leo Mills, Vivian Aber, Barbara McDonald, Joanne Bodziony and Rick McKelvey.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- Minutes of last meeting approved by membership. We now have 228 members.
- Future meeting date is - July 7, 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 — Monthly income \$30.36, YTD Income \$4990.66, Monthly Expenses \$302.02, YTD Expenses \$2472.24, Monthly Balance \$271.66, YTD Balance \$2518.42, Cash Available \$5479.88. He announced that the SWA Club is applying for 501-C3 tax exemption status.
- Welcome new members Ron and Deborah Myers, Carol Hoffman.
- Program Director, Barbara McDonald, reported that a presentation on Bear Safety will be presented on either September 10 or 17, 2025. She continued that the volunteer committee continues to work on planning for the 2026 SWA Gala event - our first major fund raiser. She is also planning a “Back to Nature Wildlife Rescue trip to Orlando.
- Bob spoke to the various wildlife dedicated days during the month of June.
- Rick gave a thorough update on the **fStop Candid Photo Program** which now includes nine (9) cameras throughout the community. Along with the usual deer and birds he has photographed panthers bears and raccoons.
- One member announced that he has been removing snakes from neighbors garages. He notes that most enter through door that are left open. Close your garage door please.
- 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, Eglin 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.

FWC LEADING HISTORIC RESTORATION EFFORTS ON LAKE KISSIMMEE - Reprinted from FWC website



The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is undertaking a historic restoration effort to promote native plant communities through large-scale revegetation on Lake Kissimmee. The FWC has allocated an unprecedented \$2.35 million over two years to support this restoration effort, marking the largest revegetation project in agency history. This revegetation project is just one component of an FWC-led, multidisciplinary approach to restoring the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes system.

Lake Kissimmee, one of the largest natural lakes in Florida, is a premier fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing resource and home to the endangered Everglade snail kite. In recent years, Lake Kissimmee's vital aquatic grasses have declined due to grazing by exotic apple snails, hurricanes and artificially stabilized water levels. This aquatic habitat restoration project is designed to restore healthy aquatic habitat that will enhance water quality and improve habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife, including waterfowl and the unique Florida bass.

From 2017 to 2024, a total of 686,635 native aquatic plants were planted in Lake Kissimmee, including 233,191 maidencane plants, 211,444 Egyptian paspalidium plants (both grass species are commonly known as Kissimmee grass) and 242,000 bulrush plants along various shorelines around the lake. Planting areas were chosen based on water depth and firmness of the lake bottom to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and provide additional Everglade snail kite foraging and nesting areas.

In spring 2025, another 534,545 grasses and bulrush were planted along the western, southern and eastern shorelines, along with Brahma Island in the middle of the lake. Additionally, 1,100 wetland trees were planted around the lake to provide perching and nesting habitat for wading birds and Everglade snail kites. The Everglade snail kite has already been documented using the newly-planted trees.

“Native aquatic grasses are vital for the success of freshwater ecosystems,” said **Melissa Tucker, Director of the FWC's Division of Habitat and Species Conservation**. “We're pleased with the success of the previous plantings and look forward to continuing to improve the habitat on **Lake Kissimmee** to support fish and wildlife, both in and along the water. It's encouraging to see these efforts already rewarded with the presence of endangered Everglade snail kites.”



JULY FEATURED WILDLIFE RESCUE PROVIDER



BACK TO NATURE WILDLIVE REFUGE

Our Mission

The mission of the Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge is to rescue, raise, rehabilitate, and release injured or orphaned Florida native species and to provide education about respecting and preserving the environment through our non-releasable permanent residents known as “educational ambassadors.”

FOUND AN ANIMAL? CONTACT US FOR ASSISTANCE.

407-568-5138

Our Rescue Policy

Upon arrival of every animal brought in by a private citizen, each animal is given a full examination to best determine its treatment. Rabies Vector species (bats, raccoons, foxes, skunks, bobcats, & otters) are evaluated by vaccinated staff only and extra precautions are always taken. This ensures that no harm will fall upon the other resident wildlife or wildlife currently being treated at our facility. We ask all citizens take extra precaution when transporting injured or orphaned wildlife. Please do not have direct contact with a rabies vector species. Support BTN by [contributing donations](#) towards our cause.



TAROT—RED TAILED HAWK

PRECIOUS—RACCOON

info@btnwildlife.org