



Gator Gazette

solivitawildlife.com



WINE & WILD THING - EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

February rocketed to a crescendo right out of the gate as our first fundraiser raising approximately **\$39,000** for future club needs while pleasing 230 guests with outstanding wine, food, service, music and dancing - with a little surprise vocalizing thrown in fun!

Club president, Wine Guy Bob Monica, served as Master of Ceremonies, with festivities that included a short presentation by the Gold Sponsors, The Accurate Advisory Group and a presentation of a club donation check for \$5,000 to Central Florida Animal Reserve in recognition of being named our Solivita Wildlife Not-For-Profit 2025.



Bob mentioned, *“Additional contributions would be issued to **Florida Wildlife Corridor** and to the **fSTOP Foundation**,”* the latter of which provides cameras and support for the nine candid cameras placed in key positions around Solivita with photos and video displayed at the Solivita Wildlife Facebook page. The club’s Board of Directors will consider additional contributions to area organizations that rescue and serve emergency needs of local wildlife.

The party was catered by Stonegate with music by Solivita’s favorite DJ Irwin Zalco. A host of club volunteers led by **Lee Zahuranec** and **Maryann Walkowski** ensured that the operation went flawlessly, including the raffling of an array of elaborate gift baskets, beautifully crafted and donated by Solivita resident **Amy McGavock**, as well as other prizes and craft items including beautiful quilts created and donated by **Cherry Brown**. Photos of the evening were taken and donated by **Deborah Siladie**.



All of this was enhanced by delicious handcrafted American and French wines, charcuterie and, of course, dancing to the oldies. The SWA is grateful to everyone who worked in harmony to make Wild & Wine Thing an exciting evening in support of our magnificent Solivita wildlife.

Florida Wildlife Corridor creates new PES System

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation teamed with The Balmoral Group to develop the Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) framework. The team used University of Florida produced data to identify locations within the Florida Wildlife Corridor where specific ecosystem services have been identified, and the level (high, medium, low) of ecosystem services in an area. This determination is based on factors like soil type, proximity to wetlands, fragmentation of the landscape, etc. The objective is to clearly quantify ecosystem services in a transparent fashion to provide incentives to landowners as an alternative or addition to permanent land protection.



This program gives landowners another way to protect their property from development. It works alongside other voluntary options like conservation easements and land purchases to keep land and water safe forever. Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) help cover the cost of choosing conservation instead of development, making it easier to keep the Florida Wildlife Corridor connected and keep land use compatible with nature. For more information go to -

https://www.wildlifecorridorpes-fl.com/?mc_cid=27de1f084f&mc_eid=8986f6d647

A Note From Florida Wildlife Federation

For decades, Claude and April Ward have explored Florida's wild places. They've enjoyed many long rides beneath the pines, quiet mornings watching deer cross their land in Gilchrist County, and evenings listening to quail call from the brush. What began as their place to enjoy the outdoors also became a sanctuary for wildlife.

To the Wards, this land embodies open space, peace, and a deep connection to the natural world, all the things they love about Florida. As development expands and wild places shrink, they wanted to ensure that their small piece of Florida would remain natural forever.

That's why Claude and April included the Florida Wildlife Federation in their estate plans, leaving both their property and additional assets to support its protection. Their land will remain safeguarded and may even inspire future generations through environmental education or youth programs.

Stories like these show how thoughtful planning can preserve the wild Florida we all love. As you look ahead we invite you to consider creating or updating your will. It is an easy and powerful way to protect your loved ones and reflect your heartfelt values.

Of course you may choose an optional opportunity to include a gift to FWF, helping to ensure Florida's wildlife and habitats remain protected for generations. Thank you for your dedication to preserving wild space. Your decisions today help safeguard Florida's natural beauty in the future.

FWC SEEKS SIGHTINGS OF RARE RAINBOW SNAKES

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is asking the public to report sightings of the elusive rainbow snake (*Farancia erythrogramma*), a **nonvenomous** species whose population has declined in recent decades.

Rainbow snakes are semi-aquatic reptiles that primarily feed on American eels, a prey species that has also declined in Florida waters. This dependency, along with habitat loss, has contributed to population reductions. Snake fungal disease is impacting populations in other states, raising concerns about the species' long-term survival. *"We need help from Floridians and visitors to better understand where rainbow snakes still occur in the state,"* said **Kevin Enge, Research Scientist with FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.**

Rainbow snakes are visually striking and difficult to mistake for other species. They are iridescent black or violet-blue with three red stripes along their back. Their lip and chin scales are yellow, marked with violet spots, and adults typically reach 3 to 4 feet in length. These snakes are usually found in or near water, including rivers, springs and brackish marshes. since 1952.



NOTICE

Needed: Two Additional Board Members

Dear Fellow SWA Members:

Unfortunately, the two volunteers serving as Program Director(s) have resigned for personal reasons. This leaves us without the ability to conduct any of our club's hospitality and outreach functions. These vital areas require committed individuals willing to put in the time and energy to assure that the community outreach events, and club hospitality functions that have become a signature of the club, continue.

Existing directors already have a full plate of duties to simply absorb additional responsibilities. Therefore, until appropriate resources can be aptly filled, all future events must be postponed or cancelled.

Minimal organizational and computer skills are required. If you have the time and desire to help, please contact us at swa.solivita@gmail.com. Thank you.

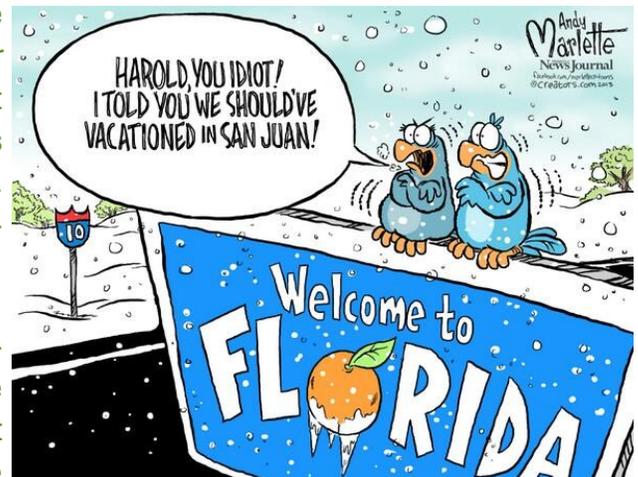
HELP FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE DURING COLD WEATHER

REPRINTED FROM VISIT EVERGLADES CITY

As colder temperatures sweep across Florida, many of the state's iconic wildlife species face challenges. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is reminding residents and visitors that small actions can make a big difference in helping animals like manatees and sea turtles during these conditions.

Manatees are particularly vulnerable during cold weather, as they require water temperatures above 68°F to survive. When the temperature drops, they gather at warm-water sites such as natural springs or power plant discharge areas. If you encounter manatees during these times, it's crucial to give them space. Disturbing them can force them into colder waters, which could be life-threatening.

If you're on a boat, follow all posted manatee protection zones to avoid collisions that can cause severe injuries. Should you see a manatee that appears injured, distressed, or dead, contact the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).



Sea turtles are another species affected by cold weather. When water temperatures drop below 50°F, sea turtles can become cold-stunned, leaving them weak, immobile, and floating on the surface or washing ashore. Though they may appear lifeless, many cold-stunned turtles are still alive and can recover with proper care. If you find a cold-stunned turtle, do not attempt to move or handle it yourself. Instead, report it to the Wildlife Alert Hotline so trained professionals can safely assist.

Florida's wildlife depends on all of us for their protection, especially during extreme weather. By giving them space, following boating regulations, and reporting distressed animals, you can help ensure their survival during these colder months. For more information on how to help, visit MyFWC.com.



During colder months our alligators can often be seen sunbathing on the shoulder of a pond. Some who are new to Florida freak out at this sight, interpreting the behavior as aggressive. But the gator is simply warming itself to maintain its proper bodily functions.

There is no need to fear this behavior. Simply remain at least 30 feet away and enjoy the view of these magnificent creatures.

And, oh yes, feel free to take pictures. Just - **NO SELFIES!**



MINUTES FROM JANUARY CLUB MEETING

Vice President, Rick McKelvey called meeting to order at 5:00 pm at Mosaics. BOD present: Leo Mills, Joanne Bodziony. Absent: Bob Monica, Ali March

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

- Minutes of last meeting were approved. Thirteen new members were welcomed.
- Next meeting date is - February 16 , 2026 at Palms. Future dates on the SWA website.
- The gator report for December 2025 indicates no gators removed. Two gators trapped in Solivita YTD.

- Leo Mills, Treasurer — **SWA Income & Expenses Y/E 12-31-2025**

Total Income	Month	\$2557.81	Year	\$14,811.27
Total Expense	Month	\$1242.78	Year	\$ 4,624.99
Total Balance	Month	\$1305.03	Year	\$ 10,186.28
Cash On Hand				\$12,876.61

FULL END-OF-YEAR FINANCIAL INFORMATION ON PAGE SIX (6)

- Our fundraising event has sold out with 224 tickets. The wine theme for the event celebrates the 250th American Anniversary with American and French wines.
- Rick McKelvey presented a program on Sharing the Landscape; Living with Wildlife. Solivita Club Expo held on January 10 was attended by Bob, Leo, and Joanne. Signed up 13 new members
- Motion made and seconded to adjourn meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6 PM

Happy
Valentine's
Day



SWA ANNUAL INCOME STATEMENT FY 2025

SWA Income & Expenses Y/E 12-31-2025

<u>Income</u>	Dec. 2025	YTD
Membership Dues	\$ 675.00	\$ 3,210.00
T-shirt sales	\$ 20.00	\$ 480.00
Cookie Sales	\$ -	\$ 854.00
Event Admission	\$ 1,782.00	\$ 9,082.00
Bank interest	\$ 0.81	\$ 5.27
Raffle proceeds	\$ 80.00	\$ 80.00
Donations	\$ -	\$ 1,100.00
Total Income	\$ 2,557.81	\$ 14,811.27

Expenses

Cost of goods sold	\$ 15.41	\$ 395.84
Marketing	\$ -	\$ 192.74
Website	\$ 278.88	\$ 896.95
Club Events	\$ 376.44	\$ 1,622.48
Meeting expenses	\$ 123.40	\$ 123.40
Card processing fees	\$ 54.13	\$ 406.95
Office Supplies	\$ -	\$ 17.11
Donations	\$ 125.52	\$ 425.52
Government Fees	\$ -	\$ 275.00
P.O.S hardware	\$ 269.00	\$ 269.00
Total expenses	\$ 1,242.78	\$ 4,624.99

Surplus (Deficit) \$ 1,315.03 \$ 10,186.28

Cash in bank/on hand -

\$12,875.61