



Corkscrew
Swamp Sanctuary

Along the Boardwalk

May, 2007

www.corkscrew.audubon.org

Possible land swap to benefit Corkscrew

A possible land swap may be in Corkscrew's future if details between Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary/National Audubon Society and the South Florida Water Management District are worked out. The trade would be mutually beneficial for each party and would consolidate existing properties for both.

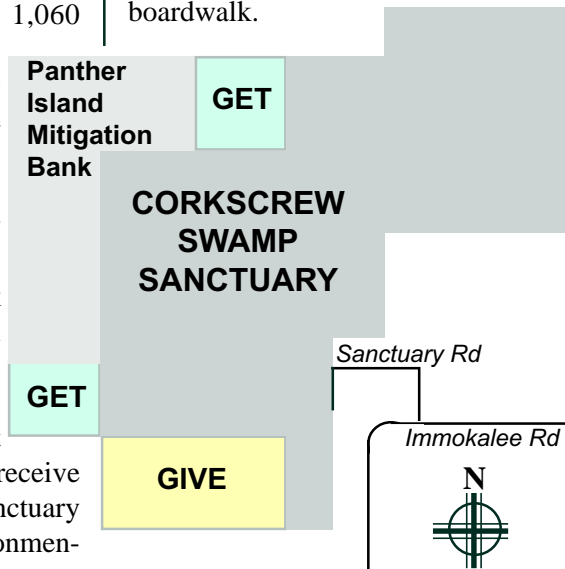
Corkscrew would receive 1,060 acres to the north and west of current sanctuary property (GET) and in return would give state 1,280 acres at the south end sanctuary (GIVE).

The larger north property Corkscrew would receive abuts Panther Island Mitigation Bank which, when completed, will add nearly 2,800 acres of prismatic wetlands to Corkscrew. That, the addition of the smaller west acreage that Corkscrew would receive in the swap, would give the sanctuary a more consolidated and environmentally important block of land to manage.

The 1,280 acres that would be traded to the state would unite South Florida Water Management District lands to the south of Corkscrew. The land, the northern portion of Bird Rookery Swamp, was extensively logged in the mid 20th century. The Water Management District would open a 10-mile hiking loop of sand/muck trails that follow some of the old logging trams. The trails would crisscross part of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) lands. Entrance to the Water Management District trails would begin at a gravel parking lot and a 1,400-foot boardwalk at the western end of Shady Hollow Boulevard (43rd Avenue Northeast).

Contrary to what was reported in an April 9 *Naples Daily News* article, the CREW trails would be entirely self-contained. They would not connect with any Corkscrew trails, nor would they provide any access to Corkscrew.

The only Corkscrew area open to the public would continue to be the boardwalk.



A Ruby-throated Hummingbird, above, and Giant Swallowtail, below, visit Coral Honeysuckle in the butterfly garden.

Bird and butterfly habitat needs help

See new birds and butterflies while helping create habitat for them.

Volunteers are needed to assist on a regular basis for the updating, maintenance (weeding and planting), watering and labeling of plants in the butterfly garden.

Hopefully, five to eight volunteers can share responsibilities so no one person is left caring for the garden each week. Plus, volunteering part of a day

in the butterfly garden is a great way to learn about native plants that attract butterflies for nectar and larva.

Please contact Sally if you are willing to help.



Quick ID Guide

Identifying Downy Woodpeckers versus Hairy Woodpeckers

Field guides point out that the Downy is about an inch smaller than the Hairy and has a wingspan about three inches less. But that's relative unless you see the two together.

The Downy has more small white spots on the wing than the Hairy. Calls and drumming are also different.

But again, those are relative to each other and without a direct comparison, it may be hard to tell. The Downy is much more common, but Hairy Woodpeckers do sometimes visit Corkscrew.

So look for a more absolute clue, and the best one is the length of the bill

relative to the length of the head. The bill of the Downy is shorter than the head is long. The bill of the Hairy is longer than the head.



DOWNY WOODPECKER



HAIRY WOODPECKER

In Case a Visitor Asks

Do you feed wildlife?

The first reaction is to say, “No, we don’t.” However, we have put up bird feeders. Why only feed birds, and what’s a good answer to the question?

The five bird feeders at Corkscrew are in areas where natural food sources have been removed and replaced by human structures – the Blair Center and the Bunting House. Since we have disturbed these natural sites, it is acceptable to provide alternative food sources for the birds.

Birds do not become dependent on feeders because feeders anywhere are always a secondary source of food. Birds prefer what they find in the wild.

So why not feed the other wildlife too?



A pair of male Painted Buntings feed at the Bunting House feeders.

We never feed wildlife in natural areas, even when food is scarce. This is critical not only because the feeding can create imbalances and reliances that are unhealthy for the animals, but it is illegal in many places. In Florida, for example, it is illegal to feed alligators.

In most instances, feeding wildlife tends to lessen an innate fear of humans.

That’s bad for the animals and bad for humans as well. Animals that learn to associate humans with food often become much more aggressive and dangerous. This is true for mammals, from bears to raccoons, and it is especially true for alligators, which are just smart enough to associate people with food but not smart enough to tell the difference.

Finally, feeding wildlife may create some dependency on humans for food and may diminish its natural desire to hunt or forage. Then the only habitat in which it has learned to survive is around humans, not in the wild.

For a short list of eight great reasons not to feed wildlife, check out www.wildlifecareofventura.org.

April Sightings



A Yellow-billed Cuckoo pauses in the Dahoon Holly tree behind the Stevens Gauge (April 24).



A Roseate Spoonbill and White Ibis forage in a shrinking puddle at the south lake (April 3).



An Osprey catches a thermal with a kettle of vultures over the parking lot (April 13).

Volunteer Notes

New seminar planned

Corkscrew has been offered another grant to present an Interpretive Guide Training seminar for Corkscrew’s boardwalk naturalists and all other sanctuary volunteers, staff, and personnel who are in a position to interact with visitors.

At least 20 attendees are needed to hold the seminar, which would be Monday, May 14, from 9 AM to 4 PM. with an hour break for lunch.

All people interested in attending the seminar, which is free, should let Sally know as soon as possible.

Fundraising Committee updates goals and priorities

The Volunteer Fundraising Committee has been hard at work organizing fund raising efforts at Corkscrew.

During its monthly meetings, the committee has established a basis for setting goals and priorities, and it is working out and coordinating the administrative details with Audubon of Florida.

Inaugural activities will begin in May or early June with a campaign to raise funds for several projects.

The committee has identified several high priority items from its list that

it will target for its initial fundraising efforts: new boardwalk interpretive signs to replace the large faded-letter or missing signs, new carts and white boards for the spotting scopes (some of which have already been purchased), and several new wheelchairs for visitor use.

Please address any questions, concerns or suggestions to any of the committee members: Joe Ambrozy, Art Blatt, Kris Gabel, Diane Kreager, Doug Machesney, Phil Nye, and Susan Schumann-Skehan.

Dry-downs & Aestivation

Spring dry-downs are an important and regular occurrence in Southwest Florida and at Corkscrew. They are essential for the survival of the swamp as a whole. So there is no need to be concerned; plus, it is a great opportunity to educate the visitors.

Last October, a visitor from the U.K. sent an email to David Anderson, president of Audubon of Florida, which read: "My family and I had a great vacation in Florida this June. We visited Corkscrew Swamp for the second time in our lives and were astonished to see that all the lettuce lakes had dried up. ... [Will] the lakes recover? Have you any news?"

That question is typical of what is asked every year in April and May.

The ebb and flow of water is a regular occurrence. It is healthy and a necessity for the swamp.

Many plants such as cypress trees can't reseed in water and must have a dry-down in order for new seedlings to get a fast start and grow enough that their crowns are above the water level when the summer rains return.

Animals, herps, fish, and birds all have adaptations that enable them to survive dry-downs as well, but dry-downs do mean a change for them. There are two basic strategies: stay and tough it out, or move on.

Warm-blooded animals, including wading birds, require daily food and don't have a choice. They travel to areas that provide food and water.

Cold-blooded animals don't need to feed daily to survive, so they do have a choice. Many stay.

Sirens such as the Two-toed Amphiuma, as well as salamanders and lungfish, burrow deeply into the bottom mud and create a (nearly) moisture-impervious cocoon in which they



In June, 2001, the north lake dried enough that grasses emerged. For a short while, it and the south lake became meadows.

await the return of the water.

The technical term for this spring/summer hibernation-like system shut down is *aestivation* (from the Latin *aestas*, summer).

Other animals do the same thing. Everything from Apple Snails to Crayfish to Water Moccasins aestivate. The snails and crayfish burrow into the soil while it is still damp, while water snakes find a cool, protected shelter safe from predators such as beneath exposed roots at tree bases to await the return of the water.

A dry-down is essential for the Apple Snails for another reason. It allows emergent vegetation needed by the snails to get a start.

Turtles may either stay or go. Some like the Chicken Turtle wander far afield and dig down into the dirt or litter to await the rainy days. Red-bellied Turtles dig down into the bottom mud so that only their nostrils protrude above the surface.

Alligators can travel, walking several miles over land, and seem to have a water-seeking orientation which brings them to safety in the nearest river, pond, canal, or lake. They are also

capable of digging long horizontal burrows into muddy banks, or of digging out a hole in the lake bottom. In previous years, gators have dug burrows in the south lake and crawled in to wait.

Many herps that aestivate are able to slow their metabolism greatly. Oxygen consumption and heart rate drop significantly and fat is metabolized much more slowly. Because large individuals store more fat and consume less oxygen per unit weight than small ones, they are able to survive much longer periods of aestivation.

Frogs settle into the bottoms of cracks in the

muddy bottom to wait. Treefrogs find a nice spot in a *Tillandsia* or other protected nook.

Some fish can survive in wet mud for short periods of time, up to several days, but none of them can really survive a full dry-down.

So most fish have different strategies. Some are great dispersers and they seek out permanent water bodies (canals, deep ponds) for the dry season, and as soon as the marsh re-floods, they move great distances back to the forest. Other species are prolific breeders and while individuals may die, the species as a whole rebounds quickly. Gambusia, for example, can sustain a 90% kill and still be at full numbers in the fall because of their rapid reproductive cycle.

Other aquatic invertebrates adapt to the dry season by timing their reproduction so that an immature life form (larvae or eggs) is in the soil growing and the adult emerges when the water returns.

Dry-downs are also when more mammals such as bear, bobcat, and deer move into areas normally too wet for them and are seen from the boardwalk.