

Highlights of the January Audubon Conference "Transforming Landscapes for a Sustainable Future"

One of the aims of the conference was to teach residents to enhance our yards with native plants for butterflies and birds. But most importantly we learned that we must do this for human and wildlife survival as well and to help the IR Lagoon. Think of native plants in your yard as bird feeders.

The 2014 book *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Pulitzer Prize author Elizabeth Kolbert stated that Earth is undergoing a modern, human-caused extinction event resulting from the collapse of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. A great number of plant and animal species, including humans, are in serious jeopardy.

Keynote speaker Professor Doug Tallamy (Univ. of Delaware) explained how replacing native plants with alien landscaping species has affected the food on which our wildlife increasingly depends. Our landscapes must support life, sequester carbon, clean and manage water, enrich the soil, and support pollinators. Several points he made:

- Insects are beautiful and critical to our survival since they pollinate 80% of plants, including crops.
- Even seed-eating birds depend upon insects, especially caterpillars, to feed their chicks.
- Native plants are needed to attract insects.
- Insects specialize on only a few types of plants and thus we need diversity of native plants to attract diversity of insects needed to feed different species of birds
- 90% of the insects that eat plants can develop and reproduce only on the plants with which they have co-evolved.
- Every native species is an essential part of a food web.
- Insects are quickly disappearing since we are losing our native plants.
- Lawns (turf) plus 3,300 species of introduced plants are replacing our native plants.
- 432 species, 37% of North American birds are at risk of extinction.



[from: Pelican Island Audubon Society *Peligram*, Feb. 2018 by Dr. Richard H. Baker]

INTERESTING FACTS & FIGURES

about the Florida House of Representatives

- 57% are native Floridians
- 66% Republican; 34% Democrat
- 77% male; 23% female
- 97% have a BA degree or above; 8% have AA or some college; 11% have no college education
- 77% married; 23% not married
- 66% are Protestant; 24% Catholic; 7% Jewish; 6% not reported
- 58% incumbent; 42% freshmen (remember that Florida has term limits for legislators).
- 66% white; 17% African American; 16% Hispanic
- 15% are age 60+; 28% are 50-59 years; 24% are 40-49 years; 31% are 30-39; 3% are under 30
- 53 are business people; 27 are attorneys; 17 are in the service industry; 17 are in public service; 8 are in education; 8 are in health care

Don't Get Fleeced

Since Patagonia introduced its fleece Sunchilla jacket in 1985, the cozy, lightweight synthetic fabric has become a go-to to outdoors. Now this warm and affordable material is giving environmentalists a chill. Here's why: Each time fleece gets washed, thousands of tiny plastic fibers are released and ultimately end up in rivers and oceans, where they work their way through the food web. What's an eco-conscious fleece lover to do? First, don't launder so much which extends the life of a garment while reducing energy and water use as well as the shedding of fibers. Then, look into outerwear alternatives.

[by Bill Fink, from *Sierra Magazine*, Jan/Feb. 2018]

Good news! The Florida legislature approved \$100.8 million for Florida Forever program!

- \$77 million for environmentally endangered lands (Division of State Lands)
- \$10 million for Florida Communities Trust
- \$6 million for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program
- \$5.8 million for Rural and Family Lands Protection Program easements
- \$2 million for working waterfronts.

[from: Audubon Florida e-mail message]

BAD NEWS: There's an Effort to Overturn the Uranium Mining Ban Near Grand Canyon

The National Mining Association (NMA) and the American Exploration and Mining Association (AEMA) filed petitions on Friday asking the Supreme Court to reverse the 2012 ban on new uranium mining claims on more than 1 million acres of public land surrounding Grand Canyon national park.

In December, the 9th circuit court of appeals upheld the ban after a legal challenge by the industry, to the relief of environmental groups and Native American tribes in northern Arizona. Ken Salazar, secretary of the interior under Obama, instituted the ban for 20 years on public land that the Havasupai tribe relies on for water.

NMA spokesman Luke Popovich said his organization was challenging Salazar's constitutional authority and said uranium mining did not harm the land. [from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/10/grand-canyon-uranium-mining-ban-supreme-court>]

What Should I Do With Cat Poop?

If you have a septic system, don't flush anything from the litter box. It should not be flushed into municipal sewer systems either because many of them cannot eliminate *Toxoplasma*, a nasty organism sometimes present in cat waste. The release of *Toxoplasma* into the ocean has been known to kill sea otters! People with weak immune systems should avoid cleaning cat litter boxes as should pregnant women.

The most common cat litter contains sodium bentonite, the mining of which tears up land surface (though restoration of mined land is now required by law). The disposed litter adds an estimated 4 million tons of material to our landfills annually. Better alternatives are organic, biodegradable litter made from corn, corncobs, citrus scraps, grains, wheat, paper, or wood shavings.



Cat litter should be placed in a bag, tied shut, and put in the garbage. Also remember that your cat should never be allowed outdoors without scrupulous supervision because cats kill billions of birds very year.

[from: *Sierra* magazine, March/April 2018]

Newsworthy Items from Sierra Club

- San Francisco and Oakland sued five of the world's largest fossil fuel corporations for the cost of seawalls and infrastructure necessary to protect the cities from sea level rise and other consequences of climate change.
- High concentrations of anti-depressants are found in the brains of fish in the Great Lakes region.
- A study finds plastic fibers in 94% of US water samples, including the US Capitol Building, EPA headquarters, and Trump Tower.
- Record-low numbers of Columbia River salmon are found in waters off the Pacific Northwest. There are, however, large numbers of warm-water-loving mackerel.

[From: *Sierra Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2018]

What We Can Do To Help Monarchs

During their long migratory journey, monarch butterflies are susceptible to drought and lack of food. Milkweed is the sole food resource for monarch caterpillars and the only plant on which females lay their eggs, so it is key to their survival. Visit



monarchjointventure.org to learn which varieties of milkweed are native to your area. You can request a seed kit at monarchwatch.org and turn your garden into a monarch waystation!

[from: *Solutions*, EDF magazine, Winter 2018]

What's in Our Household Cleaners?

A clean house is a healthy home. Or is it? It depends on what toxic chemicals are in the products we use. New York and California have announced rules requiring manufacturers to disclose ingredients online and, in California's case, on the packaging, too. In 2013, the Environmental Defense Fund helped Walmart create a plan that cut 23 million pounds of toxic chemicals from products such as laundry detergents, cosmetics, and household cleaners. In 2017, Walmart set a new goal to cut an additional 55 million pounds by 2022. Now Target and CVS have announced chemical reduction plans of their own.

[from: *Solutions*, EDF magazine, Winter 2018]