A Message From Ken...

Our St Lucie County Master Naturalists have been a busy bunch.

The instructors have put together an amazing Uplands module which begins in January 2012. Unfortunately, we could only enroll 22 students and had to place several on a waiting list including some of our past students. Rest assured, we are working hard to meet the needs of all our students.

Also, we officially formed our own Master Naturalist Chapter in St Lucie County. Officers will be elected in early 2012. Additional details will be coming soon.

Much thanks to all the Master Naturalists who braved the brutal weather to vote on official bylaws. Your input was hugely valuable.

Finally, we have several upcoming activities for members. These activities include lady beetle releases for local schools, botanical gardens and environmental centers. Lots of fun!

Thank You Steering Committee

In August 2011, the Extension office conducted a listening session to listen to the needs of the Master Naturalists. It was a very fruitful session resulting in the formation of a Steering Committee. Volunteers included Susan Wright, Li Roberts, and Kathie Smith. Since then, we’ve adopted a new set of bylaws, formalized our mission and have a clear path forward for 2012.

Much thanks to Li, Kathie and Susan and all the St Lucie County Master Naturalists who have lent a hand in the activities we’ve conducted.
Wildlife Wheel

Are you planning to spend time volunteering at local environmental festivals? If so, you’ll be thrilled with this.

Master Naturalist power couple, Mimi and Randy Swaringen, have once again stepped up to the plate and created this fun Wildlife Wheel activity for youth. They constructed this fun fact game with the hopes that St Lucie County Master Naturalists would borrow it and use it to teach environmental festival-goers about wildlife. They also made an offer to supply a tent and other items for those of us planning to volunteer time interacting with the public at these festivals.

If you would like to borrow the Wildlife Wheel or any other supplies, please contact

Randy Swaringen
Randy@whiticar.com

Mimi Swaringen
mimi425@bellsouth.net

GOOD JOB!

April Lady Beetle/Schoolyard IPM

Lady beetle releases are a great way to introduce elementary school children how to use natural predators to control pest populations.

In April 2012, St Lucie County Master Naturalists will be working with children to conducting lady beetle releases. Target locations will be local environmental education centers, botanical gardens and elementary schools.

If you are a St Lucie County Master Naturalist or Master Naturalist-in-Training and you would like to participate in this fun activity, please contact Ken Gioeli at kgioeli@ufl.edu.

Ken will be coordinating releases in St Lucie County while two additional Master Naturalists have expressed an interest in coordinating releases in Martin and Indian River Counties.

Our Mission...

As Master Naturalists, our mission is to act as stewards for our environment, protecting what is critical to the survival of all species including our own. Our mission is to propagate this awareness through the use of research-based information and through teaching events, nature walks, and community activities. Master Naturalists will also engage with others who are striving to protect and nurture our natural resources. The Master Naturalists are affiliated with the University of Florida / IFAS St Lucie County Cooperative Extension and partner organizations including the Oxbow Eco-center, Savannas Preserve, Manatee Observation and Education Center and Wrensong Science & Environment Education.
BIRD MIGRATION

by Elsa Millard
Master Naturalist-in-Training

In Florida, we are fortunate to observe a plethora of migrating birds, whether they are passing through to the Northern Hemisphere or setting up winter residency, from songbirds to shore birds and raptors.

In St Lucie County there are numerous land areas preserved by land purchased by our county for conservation efforts. Or we can travel to West Palm Beach, Indian River County or to Melbourne to observe some of the birds that visit water management wetlands which attract numerous wetland birds and songbirds, such as Least Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Mergansers, Savannah Sparrows, Palm and Yellow Rumped Warblers, even Bald Eagles. Most of our migrating birds breed in their summer residences. However, our Bald Eagles build nests, mate and raise their young during their winter residency. We have the honor of having the third largest population of eagles, following Alaska and Minnesota.

Another way to attract birds is by providing seed, suet, fruit, nectar and water in our backyards, we might be rewarded with resident birds such as Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays and a favorite winter resident of mine, the Painted Bunting. If you provide native plants, such as Wild Coffee, Firebush, Oak trees, Wax Myrtle and perennial flowing plants, you will provide food for those birds that do not come to the feeders, such as resident Mockingbirds and winter residents such as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Cat Birds and Warblers.

I included some photos of wonderful migrating birds I spotted this year as I traveled around to different preserve areas. I encourage you to get out and visit these areas including Savannas Preserve State Park, Oxbow Eco Center, D J Wilcox Preserve, Indrio Savannas Preserve and Bear Point in St Lucie County. If you don’t mind traveling an hour, you can visit Green Cay Wetlands in West Palm Beach, Viera Wetlands just north of Palm Bay and Merritt Island Wildlife Preserve. These conservation areas are just a few, but seek others out and visit. You might find your favorite place to enjoy our resident and migrating bird populations.
Bird Identification
1. Least Sandpiper
2. Common Yellowthroat (Male)
3. Palm Warbler
4. Common Yellowthroat (Female)
5. Savanna Sparrow
6. Greater Yellowlegs
7. Black Skimmer
8. Ring-billed Duck

Photos by Elsa Millard
Master Naturalist-in-Training