



The Institute
for Regional
Conservation
(IRC)

A not for profit
501(c)3
organization

Friends of IRC News

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IRC's Native Plant Nursery
Photo: Kirsten Hines

Summer 2008

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Friends of IRC Newsletter Editor

Kirsten Hines
hines@regionalconservation.org

October isn't **THAT** Far Away...

You're probably in summer mode and it definitely feels like summer, but at IRC we're already thinking October! If you haven't done so yet, *mark Saturday, October 25* on your calendar for this year's annual FOIRC event. Thanks to you, last year exceeded our expectations. We hope to do even better this year! We need your help though...

We had great auction and raffle items last year (see example below), but it takes time to find the good ones. Please help us optimize our fundraising by doing the legwork for us! Identify sources for us, or, better yet, ask them yourselves. We also need volunteers to help with organization, invitations, food, set-up and so forth. Please let us know how you'd like to help.

Your assistance lets us focus on conservation. Thanks for letting us do that!

FOIRC Members "Brother" & Sandy Milledge on an IRC auctioned Crocodile Trip donated by the University of Florida.



Friend of IRC Member Josie Whelan observes sea critters at the recent FOIRC Seagrass Adventure at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center. (Photos: Michael Cherkiss)

FOIRC Update

- We had a great turn out for movie night! Please let us know if you'd be interested in another showing.
- Many thanks to Poller & Jordan Advertising for enabling our new informational postcards.
- Our nursery is looking great, but we need YOUR help! The summer heat and rains are alternately challenging our weeding and irrigation systems. Donations of time or money would save our plants!

Mission Statement: The Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC) is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and long-term management of biodiversity on a regional basis, and to the prevention of regional extinctions of rare plants, animals, and ecosystems.

New Everglades Vegetation Biologist at IRC

Jesse, best wishes in New York!

Sonali, welcome to the IRC family!

After just over a year in South Florida, Jesse Hoffman, our former Everglades Vegetation Biologist under our partnership agreement with Everglades National Park, returned to home to New York state to work with The Nature Conservancy. Sonali Saha was hired at the end of April to fill the vacant post.

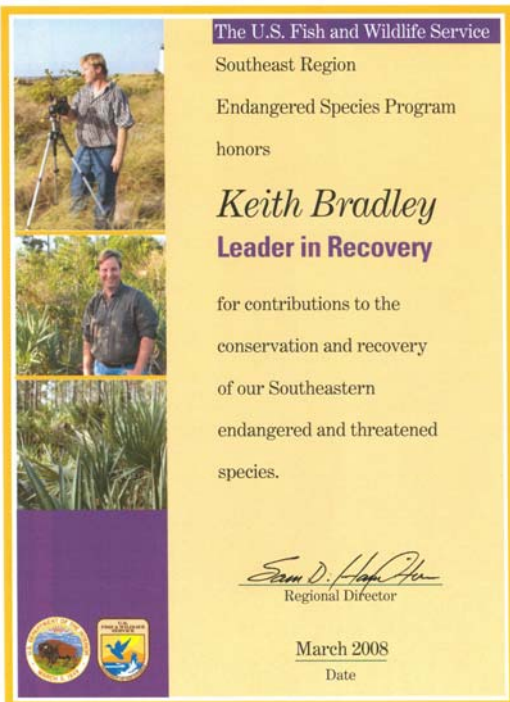
Sonali grew up in central India and moved to the U.S. in 1996 after getting a M.S. in ecology from Pondicherry University, India. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of Illinois in 2002 and proceeded to Harvard for a Post-Doc position. She has spent the last four years in Florida, doing research at the Archbold Biological Research Station in northern Florida and most recently doing work in pine rockland habitat in Everglades National Park for the University of Vermont.

While her research has taken her to vastly different habitats in India, Argentina and Florida, and has included seemingly disparate factors such as fire and logging, the common thread is her interest in how plant structure and function affects their ecological distribution. She hopes to apply this information to restoration planning in order to maintain appropriate plant communities in natural landscapes.

After only a few weeks, Sonali has advanced our Everglades research. Sonali, we appreciate your efforts!



Sonali Saha
Photo: Kirsten Hines



Keith Bradley: Leader in Recovery

While Executive Director George Gann is promoting restoration internationally (see p. 4), Assistant Director Keith Bradley is making waves at home. Every year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recognizes select employees and partners that have made exceptional contributions toward the recovery of threatened and endangered species. Keith has worked closely with the USFWS for many years doing rare plant surveys, writing management plans and evaluations and, currently, propagating various candidate species for reintroduction into private and public pine rocklands. Protecting and restoring populations of rare and endangered species is just one of the ways that IRC attempts to protect biodiversity on a regional scale and Keith has definitely played a crucial role in this effort!

Plant of the Season: Havana skullcap (*Scutellaria havanensis*)

Steven Green

Havana skullcap (*Scutellaria havanensis*) is a small wildflower in the mint family (Lamiaceae) native to southern Miami-Dade County, Big Pine Key, and the Greater Antilles. In South Florida, Havana skullcap occurs exclusively in pine rocklands and is a State-listed endangered species.



Photo: Keith Bradley

All members of the mint family have opposite, often fragrant leaves, and bilaterally symmetrical flowers. The genus *Scutellaria*, commonly and aptly named “skullcap”, is distinguished by a prominent protuberance, or “cap” on the upper side of the calyx, a structure below the flower tube. Havana skullcap can be distinguished

from other skullcaps by its small (less than 8 mm long), but showy purple flowers with two parallel white stripes. The calyx also has short, stiff hairs (trichomes), and is free of any glands.

This fine-looking wildflower makes an exceptional groundcover in any garden, usually spreading and growing wider than tall. How-

ever, Havana skullcap requires full sun to thrive. Like most native plant species, this species is extremely drought tolerant and requires no supplemental watering once established, making it an excellent replacement for your *Impatiens*, *Begonias* or other plants that require daily watering.

The IRC Nursery currently has six plants available in six inch pots. For more information on Havana skullcap and other native plants suitable for your yard, please visit our Natives for Your Neighborhood Website at <http://regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/>.

Why is Restoration so Important Anyway?

Kirsten Hines

With all this talk about restoration, you may be wondering what the big deal is. Why the sudden increased interest in restoration? A quote by George from the SER website sums it up best: “...as habitat destruction increases and the effects of global climate change continue to accelerate, conservation alone is no longer sufficient in protecting the health and continuity of many species.”

About 22% of the world’s land area has already been converted for human usage and that number is constantly increasing. While about 12% has been protected globally from direct land conversion, it cannot be safeguarded from pollution nor does this figure adequately protect the myriad biomes present on our planet. Furthermore, as we begin to more

fully appreciate the impacts of global climate change, it is apparent that ecosystems and associated species are likely to shift geographically in response to these changes. Conservation boundaries that protected “biodiversity hot-spots” at their conception, may be left protecting less bountiful, though equally important, systems in the future. Networks of natural areas are needed to accommodate these shifts and in many areas, land restoration is the only chance at accomplishing this goal. Even within the existing network of natural areas, restoration efforts are often necessary to conserve native habitats and their residents. Non-native species with general ecological requirements and few biological controls outside of their homelands have proven their ability to invade natural areas around

the world, greatly impacting both local and global biodiversity.

Approximately 1/3 of the wildlife species in the U.S. are currently at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, reduced water resources, pollution and competition from non-native species. What happens to our wildlife is an indication of what may happen to humans. Fortunately, options like restoration give us an opportunity to alter that potential fate. So why the increased interest in restoration? In a time of dark news about the state of our planet, restoration is a glimmer of light. It is the hope and reality that those native plants in your yard DO make a difference!



Globally imperiled pine rockland

Photo: Kirsten Hines

The Institute for Regional Conservation
A not for profit 501(c)3 organization
22601 S.W. 152 Avenue
Miami, FL 33170

Phone: 305-247-6547
Fax: 305-245-9797
E-mail: friends@regionalconservation.org
Website: www.regionalconservation.org

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As it becomes increasingly apparent that our planet is unhealthy, more and more ecologists are turning to restoration as a potential cure. Simply protecting remaining natural areas is not enough. The Everglades is the perfect example of a system that cannot be made well without a certain amount of restoration. Sugar cane owners south of Lake Okeechobee recently agreed to return thousands of acres of land to the Everglades in order to reinstate a vital component of the system – water flow. Restoration of the returned lands will be essential to this healing process and that is increasingly the case around the world.



George on the go

IRC Executive Director George Gann has been a proponent of restoration long

before it was en vogue and, as a result, he's currently in high demand. In his role as Chair of the Board for the Society of Ecological Restoration International (SER), he has been crisscrossing the globe. In early May George went to South Korea to assist the Seoul Metropolitan Government with design decisions to convert a 100 hectare amusement park into an environmental oasis with public access. He also met with a professor from the Seoul National University to establish SER's first international ecological restoration resource center.

At the end of May, George attended the 9th Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bonn, Germany. He met with the CBD secretariat to encourage an integrated, ecosystem level approach to protecting biodiversity through conservation and restoration, a concept which formed the basis for IRC's formation over 20 years ago.

Restoration: A Global Movement

The presentation was successful and George will travel to Montreal, Canada in September to further discuss elevating the role of restoration in the CBD.

Most recently George traveled to London to participate in an internal review of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew's activities that support ecological restoration. The review was designed to not only evaluate ways in which this specific garden can play a more critical role in global restoration, but also how botanic gardens in general can support ecological restoration.

George will also be traveling to the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain in September to sponsor a resolution that would oversee restoration in parks around the world. While we've missed George at home, we're pleased to see the expanded interest in restoration around the world and look forward to the positive results that will undoubtedly ensue!