



December 2020 Newsletter

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Monthly Conservation Note

From Destroyers to Restorers

Conservation is Evolution. This evolution regulates and changes the relationship between and among humans and the rest of nature. How fast this evolution occurs, and the path it takes, determines our future and the fate of the planet. For thousands of years, as civilizations have emerged and developed, humans have been at odds with our planet. Earth has provided a seemingly inexhaustible supply chain of food and raw materials to fuel our ascension. To obtain these benefits, nature and the people living on the land often were subjugated or marginalized. In particular, the agricultural frontier often pitted poor farmers against native ecosystems and native peoples in a struggle for survival.

The history of nature conservation is often told from the perspective of urban elites, educated and well fed, without fear of economic ruin. We see this today in the blue vs. red, urban vs. rural political framework that has emerged in America. But this is a false narrative that supports the traditional power structures that benefit most from the destruction of nature and the marginalization of native and rural people. People living on the land are often the most powerful defenders of nature. But it is critical that their economic and social

My parents were such people. Raised in the then near wilderness agricultural frontier of extreme southern Florida, they evolved from destroyers of nature to restorers of nature, ultimately transitioning from plowing up native ecosystems and growing tomatoes (which we need!) to growing native plants and helping to figure out how to restore their habitats. My mother passed away earlier this year, and my father earlier this month. They taught me that people can change, but also that we must take into account where people are coming from. While we often talk about communicating "across the aisle," perhaps we need to focus more attention on talking "across the landscape." Finding mutual respect and common ground between city and county would be one of the best investments we can make in the next decade.

George Gann

Founder and Executive Director

prosperity be tied to this defense. Redirecting rural energy to protect nature is quite well-developed around the world, from anti-poaching teams in Africa, to certified sustainable coffee farms and sustainable tourism destinations around the world. But what is even more interesting is the evolution of many rural people as they experience the loss of nature around them. In some cases, this evolution is rapid, and in others it is more gradual. First, they want to learn, then to conserve, then to restore the damage done. And there are far more of these people out there than the political landscape might presently indicate.



Don Gann, founding President of The Institute for Regional Conservation. 1931-2020.



Thank you to all who have supported IRC's programs in the last month.

Steven Woodmansee, Rita Ginsky, Pam MacKenzie, Jerry Lower, Chris Lockhart, and Amy Kimball.

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IRC has an E-Trade account, so please contact us about giving gifts of stock.

Thank you to our recent Natives For Your Neighborhood sponsorships, Amelia's SmartyPlants and Kirsten Nature Travel!

[Amelia's SmartyPlants](#) is a native plant garden center that offers plants, pots, and garden decor in Lake Worth.

[Kirsten Nature Travel](#) offers an illustrated practical guide to planting in South Florida to attract and benefit birds.

Donations allow us to provide important conservation services such as improving our free online resources, increasing protection of rare plants and animals, restoring native ecosystems, and advocating for better public policy.

DONATE

Restoring the Gold Coast Update



Despite its challenges and setbacks, 2020 has seen great progress and success in our Restoring the Gold Coast program. We have increased native coastal biodiversity throughout South Palm Beach County through small, socially distant hands-on events, engaged key stakeholders and policymakers through workshops and webinars, and have built a community of supporters and volunteers that are the backbone of this program.



On that note, we would like to thank Kimberlee Pompeo for her continual support and for driving sales of our Biodiversity Starter Plant Kits. Our repeat volunteers like John Miller and Ian Wilkinson make our volunteer days incredibly productive. Our watering volunteers like Hannah Campbell, Michael Kohner, and Nikola Stanley do the important work of watering each of our planting sites to ensure the plants get adequately established. And thanks to Egdomilia Gann for helping out with watering when volunteers could not participate this spring.

We look forward to continuing our Restoring the Gold Coast program in 2021!

Pine Rockland Initiative Update

Our Pine Rockland Initiative Program observed its 15th anniversary in 2020 by continuing to restore and manage pine rockland fragments on private and public lands. This year alone, our crew worked on roughly 170 acres on 27 sites in both Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, including private, county, and federal sites.

Restoration treatments focused on control of invasive nonnative plants, native hardwood reduction, palm thinning, and reducing populations of weedy species. We've added native pine rockland plants to restoration sites to increase biodiversity. In addition, we've continued our planting of *Croton linearis* (Pineland croton) on Big Pine Key for the federally endangered Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly. Our work has benefited eight listed species altogether!

Thank you to our PRI funders and collaborators- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Miami Dade County, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Miami Beach Garden Club, volunteers and donors on Give Miami Day and throughout the year. We pledge to continue conserving this globally imperiled ecosystem in 2021!



"Meet Our Team" Spotlights

IRC Employee - Michelle Smith

Michelle recently celebrated her three year work anniversary with IRC as a Field Biologist while also helping us run our Ecological Restoration and Management (ERM) Program. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Biology and Environmental Studies from Florida State University. Michelle gained botanical experience in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, the Atlantic Coastal Plain of Georgia and Florida, and in the high-desert, sagebrush-steppes of eastern Oregon. More recently, Michelle has gained experience in north and south-central Florida conducting rare plant and

invasive plant surveys, gopher tortoise surveys, and vegetation monitoring surveys, and is a contributor to the University of South Florida Herbarium. Michelle's interests include botany, dendrology, fire ecology, habitat restoration (land management), and photography.

Michelle recently co-authored the paper *Small herbaria contribute unique biogeographic records to the county, locality, and temporal scales*, published in the American Journal of Botany. Abstract: With digitization and data sharing initiatives underway over the last 15 years, an important need has been prioritizing specimens to digitize. Because duplicate specimens are shared among herbaria in exchange and gift programs, we investigated the extent to which unique biogeographic data are held in small herbaria vs. these data being redundant with those held by larger institutions. We evaluated the unique specimen contributions that small herbaria make to biogeographic understanding at the county, locality, and temporal scales.



Upcoming Events

Be on the lookout on our Facebook page, website, or next newsletter for upcoming events for our Restoring the Gold Coast and Green Delray Programs!



Recent Events

Atlantic Dunes Park Restoration

As part of our RGC program, we have continued our restoration of Atlantic Dunes Park. With the help of volunteers, we planted over 60 plants including digging up and replanting plants already at the park into a better habitat. Brazilian-pepper were trimmed and treated.



FREE IRC ZOOM WORKSHOP
Seagrapes and Biodiversity
With George Gann and Colleagues

Join IRC's Chief Conservation Strategist, George Gann, as he leads *Seagrapes and Biodiversity*, a workshop contributing to understanding the issues behind seagrape trimming, ecological restoration, and coastal conservation.



This workshop will include presentations, panel discussions with IRC colleagues such as Jimmy Lange, and open Q&A.

Wednesday, December 9th, 2020

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Go to <https://zoom.us/j/977667192455>

Click "Join Meeting"



Seagrape and Biodiversity Workshop

In case you missed our "Seagrapes and Biodiversity" workshop this month, here is a [recording](#) of the workshop.

IRC would like to thank our amazing panelists (George Gann, Rob Barron, Niki Desjardin, Jimmy Lange, and Mike Zimmerman) and 40 participants for making this workshop a great success!

If you have any feedback or follow up questions, please direct them to [Cara Abbott](#).

Cara Receives TCC FAEP Award

IRC's Education and Outreach Coordinator, Cara Abbott, was the recipient of the Rising Star Award from the Treasure Coast Chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (TCC FAEP).

Congratulations, Cara! And thank you for the recognition, TCC FAEP!



DELRAY CHAMBER
Hometown Heroes Awards



NOMINEE:

George Gann
Institute for Regional Conservation

2020
CRYSTAL PALM AWARD
FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

"George is on the front-lines of fighting climate change here in South Florida. We need to celebrate his efforts and support them in any way we can. I am consistently impressed by his community service work, presentations (his webinar series was invaluable!), and educational pieces that he puts out for free. Through George, I've learned so much more about Florida's native habitat, and the efforts needed to protect our coastlines and homes from destruction."

"Conservation requires teamwork; without my family, colleagues, friends, and support from the community, I would never get anything done. Thanks for the honor!"

Thank You Friends in Delray Beach!

What an honor for IRC's George Gann to be part of an incredible group of people nominated for Hometown Hero awards by the Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce. Thanks to everyone who supported his nomination for the Crystal Palm Award for Community Service. None of his work at IRC and the Society for Ecological Restoration is possible without his family, friends, colleagues, and support of the community.

Congratulations to all of the winners!

