



# Institute for Regional Conservation

## July 2023 Newsletter

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## Monthly Conservation Note

### IRC Hosts the National Geographic Photo Ark!

Last month, IRC and our Pine Rockland Initiative hosted National Geographic Explorer Joel Sartore, world-renowned photographer and founder of the National Geographic's Photo Ark project, who visited Miami-Dade County to document the work that IRC and partners are doing to restore habitat for the Miami tiger beetle, Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly, and many other critters that inhabit the Richmond Pine Rocklands.

Working with Frank Ridgley and Tiffany

In April, I had the honor of becoming a National Geographic Explorer and our project became the first ever funded by Photo Ark's new **Species Impact Initiative**, which supports science-based, on-the-ground conservation projects chosen through a peer-reviewed grant process. The National Geographic Society will also elevate the profile of the conservationists, their work, and their focal species as part of its amplification of the Photo Ark. Baseline monitoring for our project...

Moore from Zoo Miami and other members of our collaborative team, Joel was also able to photograph both of our focal species as well as many other pine rockland invertebrates and native pine rockland plants.

A National Geographic Society film crew was on hand to film Joel as our project team and I showed him our restoration sites at US Coast Guard, Richmond Station, and Zoo Miami. Also, on hand were key partners from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Sandra Sneckenberger, Kevin Kalasz, and Shawn Christopherson, US Coast Guard project liaison Megan Clouser, and IRC's ecological restoration and management crew.

(to continue reading, see "Joel Sartore and National Geographic Visit Miami" below in newsletter)



Cars line the road between pine rocklands at US Coast Guard, Richmond Station, and Zoo Miami.

## Upcoming Events

### August 5 Ecological Restoration Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park

Join IRC and the City of Boca Raton on Saturday, August 5 from 9am to 11am at Red Reef Park. IRC and volunteers will be working together to install a variety of native plants to the beach dune and coastal strand just north of lifeguard stand 9.

This event is designed for volunteers of all ages and experience levels as participants will be instructed how to properly install our plants and learn about coastal ecosystems.

Please be sure to [RSVP here](#) as space is limited for this event.

A poster for an ecological restoration event. At the top, it says "Restoring the Gold Coast Program" and "The Institute for Regional Conservation" with a logo. Below that is a photograph of several people working in a field, planting or tending to plants. The text on the poster reads: "ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION EVENT", "WHEN: SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH", "TIME: 9AM-11AM", "WHERE: RED REEF PARK, BOCA RATON", "REGISTER HERE:", and "HTTPS://WWW.VOLUNTEERMATCH.ORG/SEARCH/OPP3711038.JSP?".

**Restoring the Gold Coast Program**  
The Institute for Regional Conservation

**ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION EVENT**  
WHEN: SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH  
TIME: 9AM-11AM  
WHERE: RED REEF PARK, BOCA RATON  
REGISTER HERE:  
[HTTPS://WWW.VOLUNTEERMATCH.ORG/SEARCH/OPP3711038.JSP?](https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp3711038.jsp)

### August 19 Ecological Restoration Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park

Join IRC and the City of Boca Raton on Saturday, August 19 from 9am to 11am at Red Reef Park. IRC and volunteers will be

# ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION VOLUNTEER EVENT



working together to restore portions of Red Reef Park. Specifics on this event are still being finalized but volunteers can expect an educational morning full of planting native species and removing invasive species.

No experience is required and volunteers of all ages are welcome. Please be sure to [RSVP here](#) as space is limited for this event.

## REGISTER HERE:

[HTTPS://WWW.VOLUNTEER  
MATCH.ORG/SEARCH/OPP3  
711040.JSP?](https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp3711040.jsp?)



## DETAILS

- Saturday, August 19th
- 9am - 11am
- At Red Reef Park, Boca Raton
- Native plant installation



**Thank you** to all who have supported IRC's programs with a \$20 or larger donation in the last month: Ami Readdy, Antonio Pernas, Beverly Donoghue, David Porfiri, Maria Ines Dori-Pels, & Mary Caseber.

Thank you to our **Monthly Sustainers** who donate \$25 or more each month: Barbara McAdam, Lindsay Boehner and Valerie Seasholtz.

While we get funding for some great projects, those funds rarely cover all of our costs, so we really do need your support to continue our important work.

Donations allow us to provide important conservation services

**Thank you** to our recent Natives For Your Neighborhood (NFYN) sponsor: **Pro Native Consulting** located in Miami-Dade County. If you're interested in our NFYN sponsorships, reach out to [Michelle Smith](#).

IRC has an E-Trade account. Please contact us about giving gifts of stock.

such as improving our free online resources, increasing protection of rare plants and animals, restoring native ecosystems, and advocating for better public policy.



Queen butterfly (*Danaus gilippus*).  
Photo by Cara Abbott.

DONATE

## IRC Receives Grant from New York Life Foundation

IRC received a \$1,000 individual grant from the New York Life Foundation. This grant acknowledges the outstanding volunteer service of John Campanola, Agent with New York Life's South Florida General Office in Sunrise, who has devoted a decade to supporting IRC and is actively serving on our Board of Directors. We would like to express our appreciation for the New York Life Foundation's continuous support over the past eight years, which has enabled us to advance our vital work in restoring ecological health and enhancing human well-being in South Florida.

Thank you John for your continued support and guidance. John has been one of our Board Members since 2015.



George Gann, Executive Director and Chief Conservation Strategist for IRC and John Campanola, Agent with New York Life.

## "Meet Our Team" Spotlight

### Welcome Back, George Guillen

George Guillen rejoined our Ecological Restoration Team in July 2023. George is



a South Florida native and FIU alumnus with a major in Environmental Studies driven by childhood fascination with the Everglades and upland flora. While finalizing research with Texas A&M University based on the modeling of tropical enhanced weathering efficiency, George is committed to expanding his understanding of the ecology of South Florida and hopes to experience as much of it as he can.

George previously worked with IRC from August 2021 - September 2022 and we are so glad to have him back on the team!

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## **New IRC Associate - Welcome, Tony Pernas**

We are excited to introduce our newest IRC Associate, Tony Pernas!

Tony is currently serving as a council person for the city of Everglades City. He previously was the chief of resource management of Big Cypress National Preserve (2019-2022). In this position he was responsible for managing all park science and resource management operations which includes wildlife and invasive species management, cultural resources, geological and physical resources, environmental compliance, science communications, and research programs.



During his career with the National Park Service, Tony also held the following positions: Supervisory Botanist for Big Cypress National Preserve from 2015-2019, Coordinator for the Florida and Caribbean Exotic Plant Management Team from 2000-2015, Supervisory Botanist for Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks from 1999-2000, Resource Management Specialist at Big Cypress from 1988-1999, and Biological Technician USDA 1985-1988.

Tony served as the President of the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council and the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils from 1998-2000. He was instrumental in establishing the Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ECISMA) in 2006 and served as the Co-Chair from 2006-2022. Currently, he serves as the President of the Friends of Everglades Cisma, a non-profit which raises funds to assist ECISMA. Tony has been a member of the Florida Native Plant Society since 1987 and is a founding member of the Florida Flamingo Working Group.

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## **Follow IRC on Social Media**

The best way to stay up to date on all things IRC is to follow us on social



media! Every week we spotlight a native plant in a "Wildflower Wednesday" post and give a glimpse into one of our many unique projects in a "From the Field Friday" post. On top of that, we share event photos and relevant news pieces.

So, if you haven't already, follow us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn!



## Pine Rockland Initiative Updates

Our Ecological Restoration Team has been implementing various techniques and utilizing tools to carry out restoration activities in Miami-Dade County. At one pine rockland site, we have undertaken a significant endeavor to reduce the cover of *Sabal palmetto* (Cabbage palm) within areas where fire suppression has been prevalent. To achieve this, we are carefully applying herbicide to the targeted plants in specific areas.



IRC Field Technician, Celeste Boncompte, applying herbicide to Cabbage palms.

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This month, our team enhanced a restoration site in Miami-Dade County by installing roughly 400 native pine rockland plants rescued from a nearby site undergoing development. Thank

you to our restoration team and collaborators for their hard work! Our joint efforts have made this restoration project a success.

Our crew has also been busy working at the US Coast Guard site, part of the Richmond Pinelands in Miami-Dade County, restoring critical pine rockland habitat for species like the Miami Tiger Beetle thanks to funding from the inaugural [National Geographic Photo Ark Species Impact Initiative](#) grant.



IRC Field Technician, Hector Reyes-Gaspar, using a pick axe to aid in making holes to install native plants into the limestone.

## Joel Sartore and National Geographic Visit Miami

*(continued from the Conservation Note above)* began in April and restoration work in May, so we had some preliminary results to show Joel and his team.

The Richmond Pine Rocklands are both critically important for the survival of many pine rocklands plants and animals, and under constant threat. These threats can be acute impacts, particularly further intensification of development in the area, such as that proposed by Miami Wilds, as well as insidious cumulative threats including the lack of periodic fire, invasive species, and climate change. It is our hope that our project, assisted through funding and amplification by National Geographic Photo Ark, can demonstrate the need for and proof-of-concept that pine rocklands can be restored to the high integrity condition needed for their many native inhabitants, including plants, invertebrates, Florida bonneted bats, and many others.

Thanks to our collaborators, especially Sandra Sneckenberger and Frank Ridgley, for making this visit a success!

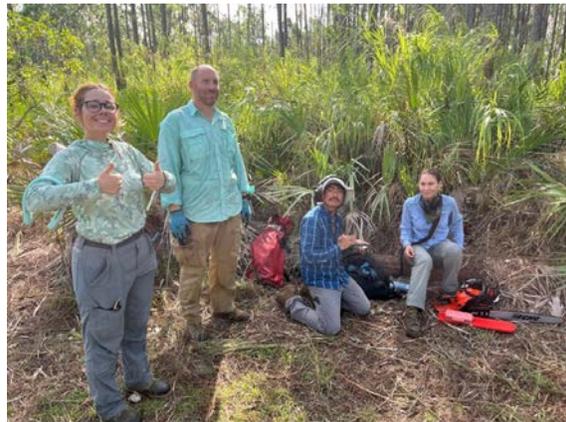
George Gann  
*Founder and Executive Director*



George Gann and Joel Sartore, and representatives from the National Geographic film crew, IRC ecological restoration and management team, US Coast Guard, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Zoo Miami, at US Coast Guard, Richmond Station. Photo by Lindsay Anderson, National Geographic.



National Geographic producer Lindsay Blatt and crew filming at Zoo Miami.



IRC ecological restoration and management team members (left to right) Melanie Flint, Alex Seasholtz, Hector Reyes-Garcia, and Celeste Boncompte on hand to demonstrate IRC's ecological restoration work.



Tiffany Moore and Frank Ridgley, Zoo Miami.



Lindsay Anderson, Director, Science and Innovation Programs, National Geographic.



National Geographic crew filming the Miami tiger beetle at US Coast Guard, Richmond Station.



## Recent Events



### "Importance of Dunes" Program at the Schoolhouse Children's Museum

IRC provided a program on "The Importance of Dunes" for children ages 3-7 at the [Schoolhouse Children's Museum](#) in Boynton Beach on July 5. This was part of their summer environmental programming series. Participants and their parents learned about the maritime hammock, coastal strand and beach dune ecosystems while matching native pollinators to their native host plants. They also learned about the importance of dune plants by simulating what happens to bare sand when exposed to waves. Each family also received a copy of our [Explore Our Coast](#) coloring book to take home.

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### Ecological Restoration Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park

On Saturday, July 8, IRC held an ecological restoration event at Red Reef Park in Boca Raton. Despite the heat, a dedicated group of twenty-five volunteers and IRC came together to restore beach

dune and coastal strand habitat within the park.

Thanks to funding and support from the City of Boca Raton, IRC was able to provide 90 plants representing 18 native coastal species such as the state endangered **Sea-lavender** and state threatened **Inkberry**. These plants were installed in an area where volunteers had removed the nonnative invasive Beach naupaka at a previous event held by IRC. The beach naupaka was invading the dunes, choking out other species from growing. This event was part of IRC's Restoring the Gold Coast program.

For more photos from the event, [click here](#).



## Coastal Conservation Education Program at Loggerhead Marineline Center

This month, IRC continued summer Coastal Conservation Education program at Loggerhead Marineline Center (LMC). Excursions were led by Cara Abbott, IRC Assistant Director of Programs, and Kelly McLoughlin, IRC Coastal Biodiversity Restoration Technician, with groups of campers ranging in age from 6-17. During the outings, 60 students went on an educational tour of the beach dunes located just east of LMC's facility and 60 students went on an educational tour of the maritime hammock just north of the LMC facility. The tours included a scavenger hunt and discussion on the remarkable ways in which biodiversity contributes to dune resilience and provides food and shelter for wildlife. Each student was given a copy of our '**Explore Our Coast**' coloring book. Thanks to the generous support of the Hornik Family Foundation



grant, this summer's educational program has become achievable.

## Natives For Your Neighborhood: Transforming Native Plant Gardening into Habitat Restoration - A Webinar

IRC had the privilege of being the guest presenter for the Florida Wildflower Foundation's monthly webinar on July 19. IRC Executive Director, George Gann, and IRC Assistant Director of Programs, Cara Abbott, shared about IRC's free online resource [Natives For Your Neighborhood](#) (NFYN). They explained the various ways you can use NFYN, and discussed the significance of at-home restoration in the context of the [United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) and combating the biodiversity extinction and climate change emergencies.

Additionally, they made the exciting announcement that NFYN has now expanded north through the Orlando area and now includes plant lists for 638 of Florida's 944 ZIP codes.

To watch a recording of the webinar, [click here](#).

**WEBINAR** **July 19, 2PM**



**Natives For Your Neighborhood:**  
Transforming Native Plant Gardening Into Habitat Restoration

presented by  
**GEORGE D. GANN**  
Executive Director, The Institute for Regional Conservation

**CARA ABBOTT**  
Assistant Director of Programs, The Institute for Regional Conservation



**Ecological Restoration  
Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park**



On Friday, July 21, IRC held an ecological restoration volunteer day at Red Reef Park. Together with volunteers and the City of Boca Raton Office of Sustainability, we worked to remove one of South Florida's most common and overlooked invasive species from Red Reef Park - the **Oysterplant**. Groups of volunteers were educated on the coastal hammock ecosystem they were working in while hand-pulling the plant from the ground.



In just under 2 hours, we removed an incredible 1,154 pounds of nonnative invasive Oysterplant from throughout the park!

Thank you to the City of Boca Raton for funding this work and for collaborating with us. This event was part of IRC's Restoring the Gold Coast program.

For more photos from the event, [click here](#).

## Become a Sponsor of Natives For Your Neighborhood

Help IRC continue to update and expand Natives For Your Neighborhood (NFYN) while advertising your business or organization to a targeted audience of over 600,000 yearly users. Ideal sponsors are native plant nurseries, native landscape consultants and environmental groups looking to reach new members.

For more information on the available sponsorship levels and benefits of sponsoring NFYN, contact [Michelle Smith](#).

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Your name and a link to your website under 'Additional Sponsors'	Your icon and/or name with a link to your website on the right bar visible on all pages guaranteed to be among the top spots.	Your icon and/or name and a link to your site on the right bar on the home page and visible on all subsequent pages including plant lists and plant details.
\$100	\$1,000+	\$250+

<https://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/>

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Conservation of rare plants, animals, and ecosystems

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