



March 2017 Newsletter

Lower Keys Update

Our crew in the lower Florida Keys has been conducting a variety of projects at the Key West Naval Air Station properties. IRC staff is removing an invasive agave species, [*Agave sisalana*](#), from the expansive hardwood hammocks found within Boca Chica Airfield. These hardwood hammocks provide crucial resources to a multitude of resident and migratory bird species, including White-crowned Pigeons, Black-whiskered Vireos, and an assortment of wood-warbler species, as well as core habitat for the federally endangered Lower Keys rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris hefneri*).



Agave sisalana

Removal of the invasive agave plants will open up areas on the forest floors for native species to regenerate and thrive.

We are also continuing our work on a pineland croton propagation and planting effort within the pine rockland habitats of Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge properties on Big Pine Key. Pineland croton ([*Croton linearis*](#) Euphorbiaceae) is the only larval host plant for the federally endangered Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak ([*Strymon acis bartrami*](#)) butterflies in South Florida, as well as an important food source for several other butterfly species. Due to increased development and fire suppression in pine rockland habitat, both Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak and Pineland croton populations have declined dramatically in recent years. This project is part of a multi-year U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Cooperative Recovery Initiative to prevent extinction of the Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak and Florida Leafwing butterflies in the lower Florida Keys.

Miami-Dade Updates

The Pine Rockland Initiative Program has been in full force since the start of 2017. Under the USFWS's Partner's Program, the

Miami-Dade Pine Rockland restoration team has finished several projects, including the Tropical Audubon Society's eight-acre Porter Russell Pine Rockland, IRC's one-acre John Kunkell Small Pine Rockland, and the Medlok family's five-acre private pine rockland (see pictures from the volunteer day [here](#)). IRC's Miami crew also has finished a Natural Forest Community project at Biscayne Senior Housing in Homestead. That site was heavily infested with Brazilian pepper, queensland umbrella tree, earleaf acacia, oyster plant, wild tamarind, and gold coast jasmine.



Pine Rockland

Maha Nusrat, IRC's Pine Rockland Initiative Program Coordinator, works to expand the program by incorporating more education and outreach activities in Miami-Dade County. These will promote the Pine Rockland Initiative Program and engage the community and environmental enthusiasts in conservation of the imperiled ecosystem. Upcoming Community Outreach Activities will include:

- A volunteer restoration project at the end of March at Barbara and Don Powell's private Pine Rockland
- Participating in Native Plant Day with a booth and oral presentation (see flyer for Native Plant Day below)
- Assisting with a restoration field trip for Florida International University's undergraduate students using IRC's Goulds Pine Rockland, led by our CEO, Craig van der Heiden
- Visiting the Girl Scouts at Camp Choe in mid-April to engage in various educational activities on their one-of-a-kind twenty-acre Pine Rockland



Volunteers at the Pine Rockland Restoration Day on 3/4/17

We also plan to start new Pine Rockland restoration projects in the Florida Keys this year.

Puerto Rico and Yucatan Updates

Over the last few months, IRC's Senior Botanist, Jorge Carlos Trejo Torres, has been working on promoting basic science and outreach in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and in Puerto Rico. He is preparing two key taxonomical publications on rare or poorly-known plants. At a scientific meeting in the Yucatan, he announced the rediscovery of a globally important fiber species,



Agave sisalana

Agave sisalana, in its native land, the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. Despite being an ornamental crop (and even an invasive plant in several parts of the world), it is rare and until recently it was considered nonexistent and nonnative in its homeland. This research has had an interesting impact on the media throughout Mexico as the research appeared in two regional newspapers and as a news-chronicle in Mexico's National Council on Science and Technology Information Agency (CONACYT). Afterwards the news spread into at least 20 printed and electronic newspapers, blogs, and official web pages, including the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) *La Jornada* (one of Mexico City's leading newspapers), and Mexico's House of Representatives. On February 15, 2017 Dr. Trejo was featured on the Mexican national TV channel, [Televisa](http://www.televisa.com).



J.C. Trejo with Jorge Mancebo, Coordinator of the School of Agronomy, posing with the first plant installed at the Arboretum of the Instituto Politécnico Loyola in San Cristóbal, Dominican Republic. The arboretum was funded in 1968 by the highly-respected priest Father Julio Cícero, S.J., a Yucatecan who lived and contributed to botany there for 44 years.

Additionally, Dr. Trejo and Puerto Rican botanist Marcos A. Caraballo-Ortiz of Pennsylvania State University are preparing to publish the scientific cataloging of two trees of Puerto Rico in the genus *Pisonia* (family

Nyctaginaceae). These species were originally considered to be "*gigantophylla*" in 1895 but this name was soon discarded. In the 1980s these species were named *P. borinquena* and *P. woodburyana*, but because these names were never officially published they are invalid under scientific standards. Both the Yucatecan and the Puerto Rican publications in process have strong historiographical and social contexts and help us to connect our botanical and taxonomical works with the societies in which Dr. Trejo and Caraballo-Ortiz are working.

Delray Beach Updates

Education and Outreach activities are in full force this spring in Delray Beach! Cara Abbott will be assisting FAU Pine Jog with its Apple Snail Adoption Program by participating in field trips to the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge with local school groups. Later in March, we will be taking the students of Delray Students First to the Mounts Botanical Garden, thanks to a New York Life Grant from IRC Board Member John Campanola.



Atlantic Dunes Park

On April 8 we will have our next restoration volunteer day at Atlantic Dunes Park, thanks to Tina Pugliese of Pugliese Public Relations. For more information on the event, see the flyer below under "Upcoming Events".

Upcoming Events

- **Native Plant Day**

Native Plant Day

Saturday, March 25, 2017, 9 am - 4 pm



**Elaine Gordon Enchanted Forest Park
1725 NE 135th Street, North Miami**



Sponsored by:

**The Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
and City of North Miami Parks & Recreation**



Enjoy a **FREE** day of learning and fun for all ages - under the oaks.

Rain or shine!

- ▶ **Programs** ▶ **Nature walks** ▶ **Hands-on activities for all ages**
- ▶ **Plant, book & merchandise sales** ▶ **Raffles**
- ▶ **Plant Clinic** ▶ **Exhibits by environmental organizations**

Learn about native plants, natural areas, landscaping, water conservation, butterflies, seeds, wildflowers and lots more.

- ▶ **Rain Barrel Workshop by Florida Yards & Neighborhoods**
\$40 per rain barrel, workshop free - Pre-register at

www.eventbrite.com/e/rain-barrel-workshop-native-plant-day-at-enchanted-forest-elaine-gordon-park-tickets-32621319244

Information at dade.fnpschapters.org and Facebook

Schedule available when final

Drinks and food will be available for purchase.

- **Atlantic Dunes Park Restoration Volunteer Day**

Saturday, April 8, 2017
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.



Volunteers Needed for Atlantic Dunes Park Restoration Day

WHAT: Volunteers of all ages are needed to help the Institute for Regional Conservation restore this park by removing invasive plants, planting native species and picking up trash.

WHERE: Atlantic Dunes Park 1605 South Ocean Blvd., Delray Beach, Florida. Metered parking is available just west of A1A. Plan to arrive early as parking space is limited.

RSVP: Send RSVPs and questions to Cara Abbott at abbott@regionalconservation.org or call 305-304-6610.



The Institute for
Regional Conservation

www.regionalconservation.org



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