



**Institute for
Regional
Conservation**

May 2025 Newsletter

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Conservation Note

Individual Species vs. Ecosystem Conservation

There are still places we call wild—and we cherish them as something essential, something elemental. Like fire, they draw us in, beyond words or ideas. So, we create art and literature, and from these we enact laws and institutions. On the ground, we establish parks and protected areas. We set these places apart. But in a world where everything is connected and human impact is everywhere, what does "apart" really mean?

This question brought a few of us together over 45 years ago to found the Institute for Regional Conservation. The Australian Aboriginal concept of humans as the "custodial species" cuts to the heart of our work. Humans decide what stays and what goes. That responsibility is a struggle—a sacred one for many—requiring balance between the brute force of human consumption and sustainability. It's not an easy job, and humanity's track record is mixed, at best.





Photo Top Left: Cypress Forest along the Loxahatchee River at River Bend Park in Palm Beach County.



Photo Top Right: Richmond Pine Rocklands, IRC Crew Conduction Post Restoration Monitoring.

Photo Bottom Right: Rare Ghost Orchid (*Dendrophylax lindenii*), by Roger Hammer

At IRC, one key expression of this balance is how we allocate limited resources to protect biodiversity. The debate between species-focused and ecosystem-focused conservation strategies looms large here. Species-focused efforts, which target individual threatened or charismatic species, often garner public support, and have clear measurable goals that attract funding. But focusing on a single species may overlook broader ecological dynamics. So, in contrast, ecosystem-based approaches aim to preserve the integrity and function of entire habitats, offering broader and potentially more resilient conservation outcomes. But if there is no panda bear; these approaches can lack the emotional appeal, legal clarity, and straightforward criteria of species-based work.

We believe the best path forward is to integrate both: using flagship species, when possible, within broader restoration efforts. Our focus is on restoring ecosystems—restoring the very structure and function of communities of life that sustain biodiversity. But we also take bold action when needed, like pushing for federal endangered status for the Ghost Orchid. For us, it's all connected, uniting people and nature to restore our world.

Robert Heinzman
Co-Founder & Chair of the Board



Upcoming Events

Monday, June 2nd - Ecological Restoration Day and BioBlitz

Join us for a volunteer day restoring Red Reef Park in Boca Raton. We need your help to install native plants at one of our new restoration sites and participate in citizen science and upload nature observations in our BioBlitz.

This event is part of the Society of Ecological Restoration's (SER) Make a Difference Week and we are thrilled to participate this year. Our event is part of a week long series of global restoration activities. To learn more [click here](#) and find out about events happening world wide.

We look forward to continuing our restoration efforts at Red Reef Park with continued support from the City of Boca Raton. Check our [events page](#) to sign up or to find out about upcoming events.



Breaking Ground at Phipps Ocean Park: A New Chapter in Coastal Restoration

The Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC) is collaborating with the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach on the restoration of Phipps Ocean Park in the Town of Palm Beach. This ambitious, over \$30 million project has officially broken ground and will be transformed into a showcase of Florida's native coastal plant communities.





IRC has been working directly with the Preservation Foundation team to collect and conserve rare coastal biodiversity from the site—like the Devil’s potato ([*Echites umbellatus*](#)) pictured here, a native plant critical to the local ecosystem. Other species collected include Erect Pricklypear ([*Opuntia stricta*](#)), Seaside joyweed ([*Alternanthera maritima*](#)), Limber caper, ([*Cynophalla flexuosa*](#)), and Water hyssop ([*Bacopa monnieri*](#)) to name a few of several hundred plants to be collected for this restoration.



Phipps Ocean Park will soon serve as home to the IRC’s Coastal Restoration Center, which will be a hub for the Palm Beach headquarters for our Restoring the Gold Coast program. This space will help educate, engage, and inspire the community while supporting the restoration of coastal habitats throughout southeastern Florida. Stay tuned for more updates on the progress of this project.



Recent Events



Native Plant Installation Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park, Boca Raton

On Saturday, May 10th, IRC held a volunteer event at Red Reef Park in Boca Raton. With support from the City of Boca Raton and our volunteers, we successfully installed native plant species to restore the dune.



We planted native species such as Beach Jacquemontia, Spanish-Bayonet, Cordgrass, and Muhlygrass. We also removed invasive species, Beach Naupaka, and continued to clear the previous removal areas along the dune. Thank you to the City of Boca Raton and our volunteers who worked hard to make this ecological restoration day a success!

Natives For Your Neighborhood Sponsor Spotlight



[Sustainscape](#) is a native nursery in the Boynton Beach area providing a large selection of native plants, consultations and installations.

What they offer:

Landscape Design
Native Plant Landscaping & Gardens
Maintenance
Water Conservation
Drainage Services

We thank Sustainscape Native Nursery for being a proud sponsor of our Natives For Your Neighborhood program.

Interested in becoming a [Natives For Your Neighborhood](#) sponsor?
Please email our administrator, Stacy Brown at sbrown@regionalconservation.org for more information.



Thank you to all who have supported IRC's programs with a \$20 or larger donation in the last month: Ann Rossman and Leah Materna-Laurel.

Thank you to our **Monthly Sustainers** who donate \$25 or more each month: John Campanola, James Duncan, Maria Rowley, Lindsay Bohner 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.

Consider supporting our efforts which 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. Click the button below.

If you're interested in being a sponsor of Natives For Your Neighborhood, please reach out to [Stacy Brown](#).

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



Quadrella cynophallophora
(Jamaica caper-tree)

Special Thank You Spotlight

We want to specially thank the Hornik Foundation for awarding us another grant for our Reviving Urban Nature Program. We look forward to hosting more restoration events this summer.

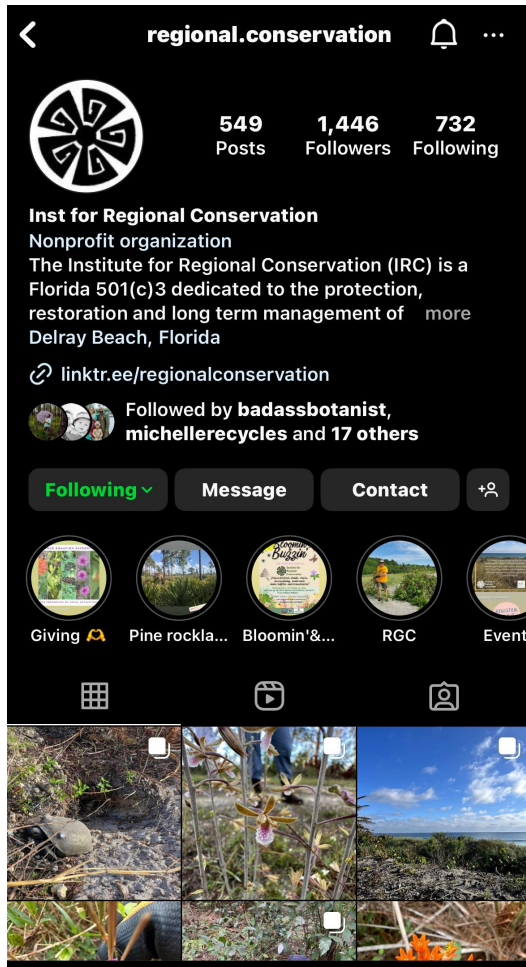
We want to thank the Chastain Charitable Foundation for their generous donation and support of IRC's programs.

PLEASE DONATE

Your donations empower us to enhance our free online resources, safeguard rare plants and animals, restore native ecosystems, and champion more effective public policies for conservation.



Follow us 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 native plants for "Wildflower Wednesday" and give a glimpse into one of our many unique projects from our "From the Field Friday" posts. You can also follow our socials where we share our event photos and lots of relevant information about the environment and beyond.

So, if you haven't already, follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)!

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