



October 2022 Newsletter

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Monthly Conservation Note

Another One Poached

When we published [Rare Plants of South Florida](#) in 2002, poaching of rare plants was at an ebb. It was still a problem, in fact we mentioned it 126 times in the book, but it was reduced from the heyday of the 1950s and early 1960s, when Frank Craighead unsuccessfully tried to prevent the loss of rare epiphytes in Everglades National Park by moving plants away from known locations into less accessible reaches of the park. That effort failed and two native orchids ([Brassia caudata](#), [Macradenia lutescens](#)) were lost from the North American flora. In presentations about our [2015 report](#) on rare species of management concern in Everglades National Park, we stated that poaching impacts were down from the historical trend, although still a threat to some orchids and ferns. Then things changed. In the summer of 2020, I was asked to work on a [petition](#) to list the ghost orchid under the Endangered Species Act

precise geographic coordinates to quickly find plants to illegally collect. Something must change, and fast. Just this week, we received reports of another major poaching event, this time in Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. Although we are still verifying details, it appears that at least one ghost orchid and 35 other rare native epiphytes were confiscated by wildlife officers from two students from a Florida university. This is self-inflicted tragedy for the students and another blow to a charismatic orchid already just barely hanging on by a thread.

George Gann
Founder and Executive Director

(see ghost orchid article below). That same summer there was a major ghost orchid poaching event in Big Cypress National Preserve, and we documented that poaching has been a persistent threat to that species throughout South Florida since at least the 1970s. But now things are blowing up. Among other factors, social media and online metadata can give poachers both the visual encouragement and relatively



Spider orchid (*Brassia caudata*).
Copyright by Roger Hammer.



Upcoming Events

Pine Rockland Working Group 2022 Symposium

You can [still register](#) for the 2022 Pine Rockland Working Group Symposium, with virtual presentations Monday, October 31st through Thursday, November 3rd, and in-person field trips on Friday, November 4th and Saturday, November 5th.

These talks are by IRC personnel:

1. Lightning talk on 10/31 at 2:30pm - IRC Biodiversity Conservation Fellow, Lauren Trotta, is representing UF with her talk titled "Community dynamics in urban Pine Rockland fragments."
2. Lightning talk on 11/2 at 11:40am - IRC Ecological Restoration Team Leader, Alex Seasholtz, will discuss "Expanding the footprint in degraded pine rocklands."
3. Invited talk on 11/3 at 10:10am - IRC Research Associate, Mary Truglio, will represent the Imperiled Butterflies Working Group with her talk about the "Florida duskywing."

PINE ROCKLAND WORKING GROUP

2022 Theme: **Wildlife**

Oct 31 - Nov 5

**VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM
IN-PERSON FIELD TRIPS**

Call for abstracts now closed
Registration is now open



Bartram's scrub-hairstreak life cycle watercolor by Kim Heise



Join Tim Joyner from Miami Dade EEL and Alex Seasholtz from IRC for this Pine Rockland Working Group field trip at Florida City Pineland on Friday November 4th from 9am - 12pm.

No registration is required. For more information on the event, [click here](#).

Field Trip to Calderon Pineland

Join IRC at Calderon Pineland for a Pine Rockland Working Group field trip on Saturday, November 5th from 9am - 12pm.

The site is the location of a restoration project led by the joint effort of the Miami-Dade County EEL program, the conservation team of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (Fairchild), The Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC), the national organization of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) and The Miami Blue Chapter of NABA.

No registration is required. For more information on the event, [click here](#).

CALDERON PINELAND RESTORATION PROJECT

Calderon Pineland is a 15 acre parcel of globally endangered pine rockland ecosystem. It was recently purchased and is managed by Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands.

As part of its Florida Butterfly Movement, the North American Butterfly Association and its Miami Blue Chapter, are joining forces with the Environmentally Endangered Lands program, the Institute for Regional Conservation, and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden to restore areas for endangered butterfly habitat.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

CELEBRATE NATIVE GARDENS
Sunday, November 6, 2022
9am - 3pm
2022 Native Garden Tour
Featuring 6 unique gardens in southeastern Palm Beach County

Native Plant Give-away
Docents On-site
Free to FNPS members
\$10.00 Non-members

Brought to you by the Palm Beach County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

in partnership with

Photo: Jamaican Caper Fireworks by Cathy Beals

2022 Native Garden Tour

The Palm Beach County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites you to its native garden tour on Sunday, November 6, 9am to 3pm. Visit any or all of five private gardens and one public natural habitat in southeast Palm Beach County. The event is free to members and \$10 for non-members. For more information visit their [website](#).

Give Miami Day

We are excited to be participating in the 11th annual Give Miami Day on Thursday, November 17 (with early giving starting November 14). This is one of the nation's largest 24 hour giving events, with bonus pools and other prizes awarded to nonprofits.

At IRC, we rely on funds raised through donors like you to keep our Pine Rockland Initiative and online resources running smoothly.

Please consider making a tax deductible donation to IRC on Give Miami Day to help us reach our \$5,000 goal by [clicking here](#).



Thank you to all who have supported IRC's programs with a \$20 or larger donation in the last month: Brenda Carr and Marlene Natiello.

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

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

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



Prairie Warbler. Copyright by: [Joe Montes de Oca](#), 2022.

DONATE

Proposed Critical Habitat for Four Everglades Plants

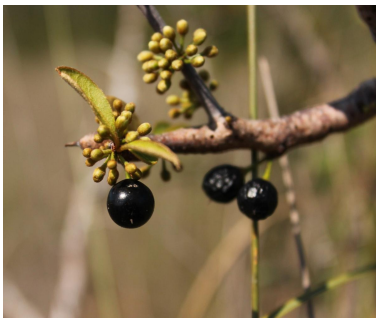
The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is proposing to designate critical habitat for four Florida Everglades plants: Everglades bully, Florida pineland crabgrass, pineland sandmat, and Florida prairie-clover. These plants have strongholds in Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve, with smaller areas of occurrence in Miami-Dade County on private and county land. Due to the never-ending activities of habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation occurring from anthropogenic activities, like urban and agricultural development, these plants and their imperiled habitat are in danger of extinction. Additional threats to these species are lack of adequate fire management, sea level rise, and competition with nonnative species. Designating their critical habitat is essential to their conservation and restoration, such as through IRC's [Pine Rockland Initiative](#). To learn more about the critical habitat proposal, see the official media release [here](#).



Threatened - *Digitaria pauciflora* (Florida Pineland Crabgrass, photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Threatened - *Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *pinetorum* (Pineland Sandmat), photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Threatened - *Sideroxylon reclinatum* ssp. *austrofloridense* (Everglades Bully, photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Endangered - *Dalea carthagenensis* var. *floridana* (Florida Prairie-clover), photo courtesy of Susan Kolterman.

Proposed Critical Habitat for Four Plants in the Florida Keys

The FWS is also proposing to designate critical habitat for four Florida Keys native

plants: Big Pine Partridge Pea, Wedge Spurge, Sand Flax and Blodgett's Silverbush, all included in IRC's [Pine Rockland Initiative](#). To learn more about the critical habitat proposal, see the official media release [here](#).



Endangered - *Chamaecrista lineata* var. *keyensis* (Big Pine Partridge Pea), photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Threatened - *Argythamnia blodgettii* (Blodgett's Silverbush), photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Endangered - *Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *serpyllum* (Wedge Spurge), photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Endangered - *Linum arenicola* (Sand Flax), photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Proposed Critical Habitat for Two Florida Snakes

The FWS is also proposing to list the Key ring-necked snake and the rim rock crowned snake as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and designate critical habitat. Both snakes are non-venomous and thrive in crevices and pockets of limestone within pine rocklands and rockland hammocks in the Florida Keys. They are at risk from sea level rise and increasingly severe and frequent tropical cyclones. The FWS proposes to designate 2,604 acres in the Florida Keys as critical habitat for the Key ring-necked snake, and 5,972 acres in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties for the rim rock crowned snake. Most of the land proposed for critical habitat designation overlaps with established critical habitat designations for 11 other species rockland species. The FWS invites public comment on this proposed rule until Dec. 13, 2022. Submit comments by going to the [Federal eRulemaking Portal](#) and enter docket number FWS-R4-ES-2022-0022.



Key ring-necked snake photo by Noah Mueller.



Rim rock crowned snake phot by Dustin Smith.

Recent Events



Restoration Volunteer Day at Red Reef Park

On October 1st, we collaborated with the City of Boca Raton, Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, Youth Environmental Alliance and volunteers from Office Depot at Red Reef Park in Boca Raton. We planted 100 native plants including Florida Keys blackbead, Florida fiddlewood, Blacktorch, Yellow necklacepod, Corksystem passionflower, Baycedar, Sea-lavender, and others.

Volunteers also removed non-native, invasive beach naupaka and picked up trash along the beach to help create healthy dunes for wildlife and humans alike!

Clash for the Coast Fundraiser

Our first ever Do Good Delray fundraising event, Clash for the Coast, was a huge success! You helped us raise \$7,171 for our Restoring the Gold Coast program in Palm Beach County!

Thank you to everyone who made this event come together on October 11th. We are so grateful to our sponsors, volunteers and community partners and especially thank our **Gold level sponsors: The Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach and Erin L. Deady, P.A.**



The Pine Rockland Initiative
transforming our thinking about
a globally imperiled ecosystem

Sierra Club - Miami Group
October 10, 2022



SER SOCIETY FOR
ECOLOGICAL
RESTORATION
International Policy Lead

George D. Gann
www.regionalconservation.org
www.scc.org

**The Institute for
Regional Conservation**
Chief Conservation Strategist

Miami Sierra Club Presentation

On October 10, George Gann gave a presentation titled "The Pine Rockland Initiative - transforming our thinking about a globally imperiled ecosystem" to the Miami Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The presentation gave conservation context, described what Pine Rocklands are, highlighted IRC's work with Pine Rocklands, and discussed management challenges.

To view the presentation, [click here](#).

"Explore Our Dunes" with IRC

On Friday, October 21st, IRC collaborated with the [Schoolhouse Children's Museum](#) in Boynton Beach to offer "Explore Our Dunes with IRC". Our Coastal Biodiversity Restoration Intern, Kelly McLoughlin, led children aged 3-7 through an exploration of our coastal ecosystem using their 5 senses. They read a book on climate change, did a "build your own dune" activity with real materials from the beach on a piece of paper, and then did a dune immersion activity using the 5 senses talking about what we hear, see, feel, taste, and smell at the beach dunes.

Photos courtesy of Linda Abbott.



Ghost Orchid Considered for Federal Protection

The world-famous [Ghost orchid](#) (*Dendrophylax lindenii*) is officially being considered for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

In a [petition](#) filed by IRC, the [Center for Biological Diversity](#) and the [National Parks Conservation Association](#) we argued that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should add the rare native orchid to the endangered species list and designate critical habitat, which is essential to its survival and recovery.

The ghost orchid is at risk of extinction from multiple threats, including poaching, habitat loss and degradation, and the climate crisis. Its population has declined by more than 90% globally, and there were only an estimated 1,500 ghost orchid plants left in Florida in early 2022.

This news is making waves with coverage from outlets like [People magazine!](#)



Read the full media release [here](#).

Photo Courtesy of Tony Pernas.



We are a nonprofit conservation organization exempt from taxes under the
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The Institute for Regional Conservation | [Website](#)
Newsletter Editor: Cara Abbott

