



**Institute for  
Regional  
Conservation**

## October 2020 Newsletter

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### Monthly Conservation Note

#### The Tree Controversy

I love trees!

But as a conservationist and ecological restoration practitioner, I know all too well that trees in the wrong place or the wrong trees in the right place can have devastating consequences for biodiversity, ecosystem health, and the delivery of ecosystem services.

We need trees to uptake excess carbon and help fight climate change; we need trees in the urban environment to mediate the heat island effect and for shade; we need trees for beauty and human emotional health; and we need trees in forests, woodlands, and savannas where they belong.

But saving trees from the chainsaw or planting trees as a feel-good exercise can become a bit of a crusade detached from science and good restorative practice. Like Smokey the Bear, we all really have to work at it to overcome decades of well-intentioned but misguided environmental education. As [published](#) by J.W. Veldman and colleagues in Science, afforestation (planting trees where previously there was no forest) of grassy biomes can have

some forests. And the same holds true of shrubby ecosystems.

In Florida and beyond, incredibly diverse pineland savannas have been lost by the millions of acres to a combination of fire suppression, afforestation, and outright destruction. Their restoration depends on reinstating an open canopy and a grassy understory. As has been covered by the [Coastal Star](#), efforts to restore the incredibly rare shrubby coastal strand ecosystem in southeastern Florida are complicated by efforts to "save" seagrape trees that have taken over the shrubby and grassy dunes.

All over the world, trees are being planted by the millions without sufficient thought about what species are [locally native](#), and how to maximize the positive effects of tree planting while minimizing collateral damage to local and regional biodiversity.

We need trees for a sustainable future, both locally and globally - but perhaps we all need to become a little more wise about trees for our efforts to bear real fruit.

**George Gann**

*Founder and Executive Director*

terrible consequences for nature while doing little to absorb carbon or mitigate climate change.

In fact, some grassy ecosystems, like tallgrass prairies, never stop absorbing carbon and are more efficient at capturing carbon than

Mark your calendars for *Wednesday, December 2 at 12 pm* for an IRC led workshop titled, "Seagrapes & Biodiversity Conservation". There will be more details provided in next month's newsletter.



**Thank you** to all who have supported IRC's programs in the last month. Barbara McAdam, Martha Singleton, and Douglas Thompson thank you for your contributions!

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.

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

**DONATE**

## Restoring the Gold Coast Update

This month, IRC collaborated with Jimmy Lange from Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden at Red Reef Park and South Beach Park in Boca Raton. Together, we removed invasive species such as *Scaevola taccada* in areas of the parks that may be suitable habitat for the federally endangered *Jacquemontia reclinata* (beach clustervine). Six *J. reclinata* plants were



Before



After

added to the park and several were observed naturally occurring at South Beach Park.

Additionally, while the team was working, they observed *Centrosema virginianum* (spurred butterfly-pea). This is now the only known extant population on a barrier island in southern Palm Beach County. It is historical at Atlantic Dunes Park in Delray Beach.

Thanks to the City of Boca Raton for collaborating with us on this important work! And thank you to Michael Kohner, who continues watering the native plants we added to Red Reef Park back in August.

## Pine Rockland Initiative Update

October was a busy month for our Pine Rockland Initiative. Our restoration crew worked at a number of private and public sites in Miami-Dade County. At each site, they worked to treat invasive species and control native hardwoods as steps towards restoring healthy pine rocklands.

Our crew also spent a week on Big Pine Key planting over 800 *Croton linearis* (pineland croton) plants for our pineland croton augmentation project at the National Key Deer Refuge. The goal of this project is to install 3,000 plants and sow 3,000 seeds on Big Pine Key to aid the federally endangered Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly (*Strymon acis bartrami*). Thanks to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for funding these PRI projects, and to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and Coastal Growers, Inc. for



*Croton linearis* (pineland croton)



assistance with propagating and growing pineland croton seedlings.

**BREAKING NEWS:** George Gann, Jennifer Possley, and Steve Woodmansee have updated the Pine Rockland Planting Guide. Get your copy [here!](#)



*Strymon acis bartrami* (Bartram's scrub hairstreak)

## Greensweep Project Update



We wrapped up our Greensweep project in the Florida Keys by working on a dense stand of Brazilian-pepper located on The Nature Conservancy's Papi Sawyer Preserve on Upper Sugarloaf Key.

Brazilian-pepper and other nonnative plants had overtaken an almost pristine buttonwood forest replete with many rare plants.



This buttonwood forest interfaced with a sawgrass wetland that then rose in elevation to be replaced by coastal hammock. Due to sensitivity of the habitat all work was completed using hand tools (metal bladed weedwhackers and chainsaws). Along with several state listed endangered plant species the preserve is also crucial habitat for the federally listed Lower Keys rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris hefneri*). Our hope is that native wetland species will repopulate the now accessible habitat.



Thanks to the USFWS Partners program for funding this work, and TNC for collaborating!

Pictured -  
Top: freshwater sawgrass prairie.  
Middle: before, with Brazilian-pepper dominating.  
Bottom: after, with non-natives treated.

## "Meet Our Team" Spotlights

## **IRC Employee - Christian Bartell, Field Crew Member**

Christian graduated from Southern Illinois University with a B.S. in Zoology. He joined IRC as a crew member for the Pine Rockland Initiative program in 2019 under Field Crew Leader, Alex Seasholtz. As an undergrad at SIU, he worked as a research assistant and lab technician working with a variety of animals such as mudpuppy salamanders, wolf spiders, bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, multiple waterfowl species, and many local invertebrate species. He also spent time in Alaska working with endemic Emperor Geese through U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Christian then moved to South Florida to further pursue his interests in conversation, specifically land management, where he hopes to restore the remaining pine rockland in the area.

Congratulations on one year with IRC, Christian!



## **IRC Employee - Donnie Faughnan, Field Crew Member**



Donnie is originally from upstate New York where he completed a B.T. in Fisheries and Aquaculture at SUNY Cobleskill. He joined IRC as a crew member for the Pine Rockland Initiative program in 2019 under Field Crew Leader, Alex Seasholtz. Prior to moving to Homestead, Donnie was part of the Excelsior Conservation Corps as part of the Student Conservation Association. It was in this position on the natural resource stewardship crew where he found a passion for the mitigation of exotic species and now he applies his passion to the restoration of South Florida's pine rocklands.

Congratulations on one year with IRC, Donnie!

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Give Miami Day**

It's that time of year again, Give Miami Day! This event is important for us to keep our Pine Rockland Initiative Program



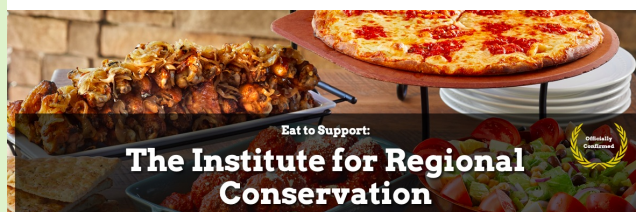
moving forward. This year, our goal is to hit \$3,000 in donations from at least 20 donors.

Give Miami Day 2020 will take place on Thursday, November 19. All donations made through [this site](#) earn a percentage of extra donations provided by the Miami Foundation. This is a great opportunity to maximize your impact through a tax-deductible donation!

The PRI is centered in Miami-Dade County and managed by IRC and collaborators with the goal to restore and manage pine rockland fragments on private lands. Less than 2% of pine rockland remains in urban Miami-Dade County outside of Everglades National Park.



### Fundraiser with Anthony's Coal-Fired Pizza



Dine with [Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza](#) in Delray Beach on Thursday, November 19 from 11am - 9pm to support IRC! Simply mention "The Institute for Regional Conservation" when you order at the store, call in an order or order through a delivery app. We will receive a portion of the proceeds all day long. Money raised will go towards our Restoring the Gold Coast program.



## Recent Events

### Restoring the Gold Coast Presentation for FAEP

IRC's Chief Conservation Strategist, George Gann, presented on IRC's Restoring the Gold Coast (RGC) program to the Treasure Coast Chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals. Thank you to Rebecca Dougherty for the invitation.

Link to presentation [here](#).



### Pine Rockland Working Group Symposium

Beyond business as usual – transforming our thinking about pine rocklands

Pine Rockland Working Group Symposium  
October 21, 2020



George D. Gann  
[www.regionalconservation.org](http://www.regionalconservation.org)  
[www.ser.org](http://www.ser.org)



George Gann presented "*Beyond business as usual—transforming our thinking about pine rocklands*" at the PRWG Symposium. In this presentation, he described IRC's mission and our Pine Rockland Initiative Program in from the Keys to Miami-Dade.

If you missed any of the many amazing webinars from the symposium, [click here](#) to view recordings. If you want to check out any of the virtual field trips included in the symposium, [click here](#).

A recording from IRC's webinar can be viewed [here](#) and link to presentation [here](#).

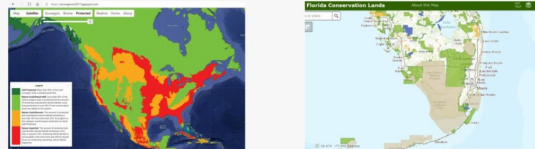
## Keynote for Center for Plant Conservation

George Gann was a keynote speaker for the Center for Plant Conservation's National Meeting on "*Recovery versus Extinction—Why Local Conservation Efforts Must Drive Global Conservation Initiative*". Thank you to Joyce Maschinski and Katie Hieneman for the invitation and coordination. Joyce Maschinski is a former IRC board member and is now the President and CEO of the [Center for Plant Conservation](#) (CPC). IRC recently formalized being a Network partner of CPC.

Link to presentation [here](#).

Recovery versus Extinction – Why Local Conservation Efforts Must Drive Global Conservation Initiatives

Center for Plant Conservation  
National Meeting  
October 9, 2020



SER SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION  
International Policy Lead

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The Institute for Regional Conservation  
Chief Conservation Strategist

## IRC Presentation for Florida Federation of Garden Clubs

Earlier this month, George Gann, presented at the District X Fall Meeting for the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs on "*Conservation and Gardening in a Changing World*". Thank you to Maria Wolfe and Carol Coleman for the invitation and coordination.

Link to presentation [here](#).

"The Institute for Regional Conservation  
Conservation and Gardening in a Changing World"

District X Fall Meeting, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs  
October 8, 2020



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The Institute for Regional Conservation  
Chief Conservation Strategist

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