



33rd Annual Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference

Creating a Wildlife Friendly Community

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What We Will Learn

- ▶ **Why it is important**
- ▶ **Think like a critter**
- ▶ **Designer Wildlife?**
- ▶ **Get Everyone Involved**
- ▶ **Being Florida Friendly!!!**
- ▶ **References**

Why It is Important!

- ▶ Urban areas are rapidly increasing in North America and around the world, and over 70% of the populace resides in such environments
- ▶ For example, Phoenix AZ, annexed 214 square miles between 1990 and 1997 (Gober 1998).
- ▶ These areas can have a profound impact on the environment, especially on local plant and animal communities.



Why It is Important!



- ▶ Several “green” developments are being built in Florida, but typically these developments are passive in nature.
- ▶ Homes may be built to energy-efficient standards or have a conservation landscape design, but after the homes are sold, the developer leaves and it is up to the homeowners to manage their yards, neighborhoods, and homes.
- ▶ Typically, no continuing educational program is implemented in these communities.
- ▶ However, decisions made by homeowners ultimately determine whether a community functions as a “green” community.

What to do???

- ▶ Homeowners can do many different things to provide wildlife habitat.
- ▶ Essentially, **wildlife habitat consists of food, cover, water, and space.**
- ▶ However, providing habitat is not enough. One must manage the yard or neighborhood so that impacts are minimal.



Wildlife habitat???

Think about it.....



Cuban Tree Frog
Invasive Species

- ▶ Neighborhoods can either have a negative or positive impact on both local and nearby wildlife habitat.
- ▶ People may plant invasive, exotic plants that invade nearby natural areas (for example, Chinese Tallow, Mexican Petunia).
- ▶ The growth of these plants in natural areas destroys wildlife habitat.
- ▶ Also, pets may run loose in neighborhoods and nearby areas. Pets can disrupt wildlife populations through hunting and harassment of animals.
- ▶ What people do within their own yards does affect nearby wildlife populations.

Creating Meaningful Habitat or - Think Like a Critter..



- ▶ Wildlife are affected by how homeowners manage their yards and neighborhoods.
- ▶ On a larger scale, how one manages yards and neighborhoods can have a positive effect on surrounding habitat.
- ▶ For example, a neighborhood may separate natural areas.
- ▶ These natural areas can be connected if residents provide a *corridor* of natural vegetation through the neighborhood.

Working Together as a Community

- ▶ Residents can plant natural vegetation in their individual yards so it is near or connected to vegetation in the next yard, and so on.
- ▶ This creates a corridor that animals can use to travel from one natural area to another, thus benefiting wildlife at a larger, community scale.



Think Like a Critter



- ▶ **Limit the amount of lawn**
- ▶ Lawn is like concrete to most species of animals. It offers very little food or cover.
- ▶ Wildlife is attracted to areas that are structurally diverse.
- ▶ These areas provide shelter in which to hide from predators or build nests.
- ▶ Further, the diversity of plants provides more feeding opportunities.
- ▶ Most importantly, diverse areas attract more insects and most birds eat insects.

Think Like a Critter....

- ▶ **Add islands of vegetation**
- ▶ Islands of landscaped vegetation are also very helpful to wildlife.
- ▶ Locate the islands so they are *near* each other.
- ▶ Overall, the nearer they are to each other, the more likely an animal will cross from one island to the next.
- ▶ A group of islands reduces the amount of open space animals have to cross.



Increase Vertical Layering



- ▶ Increasing plant structure between the ground and the tree canopy is called "vertical layering."
- ▶ Planting bushes or ground covers below some of your trees would benefit wildlife.
- ▶ Planting a variety of vegetation in different sizes and heights provides more cover and feeding opportunities for wildlife species.



Provide Snags and Brush Piles

- ▶ As trees become diseased or die, consider leaving them standing as "snags."
- ▶ Many wildlife species use snags for feeding and nesting.
- ▶ While nest boxes supply homes for many species, some woodpeckers will only use cavities they excavated themselves.
- ▶ Many of the insects that occur in snags are food for woodpeckers and other bird species.



Provide Water



- ▶ Even a small amount of water can help animals out a great deal.
- ▶ Birds prefer baths with textured bottoms for firm footing. You can cover smooth bottoms with pebbles or sand.
- ▶ Keep the water in birdbaths clean and consistently available. Don't use bleach or other chemicals to clean your birdbath—scrubbing it with a textured sponge every few days will remove algae.



Butterfly Watering Stations

- ▶ Butterflies have special requirements for drinking. They take in liquids through their proboscis, a long, hollow tube that is sort of a modified tongue.
- ▶ Butterflies are incapable of drinking freestanding water, such as in a birdbath.
- ▶ Ponds are not only beautiful, but also attract a variety of species and enhance amphibian breeding.



Plant Native Vegetation

PURPLE PASSIONFLOWER
Passiflora incarnata



- ▶ It doesn't have to be entirely native to be “wildlife” or “Florida Friendly.”
- ▶ Native plants will provide reliable sources of food and nectar
- ▶ Remember! Right plant – Right place!!!!!!
- ▶ Native plants in non-native conditions make them non-natives.



Provide Bird/Bat Houses and Bird Feeders

- ▶ Adding birdhouses (nest boxes) and bat houses in your yard will provide nesting and roosting shelter for wildlife.
- ▶ These resources will be used primarily by birds and bats but can be used by other species if not occupied



Remove Invasive Exotic Species



- ▶ Approximately 1.7 million acres of Florida's remaining natural areas have been invaded by exotic plant species.
- ▶ In fact, invasive exotic pest plants destroy more natural habitat every year than development.
- ▶ When it comes to exotic non-native plants, what we do in our *individual yards* can affect areas far beyond our yards

Manage Pets

- ▶ Scientists estimate that cats are responsible for killing hundreds of millions of birds and possibly more than a billion small mammals in the U.S. each year.
- ▶ Also, do not offer food to stray animals. Feeding strays will increase local populations.
- ▶ Further, a variety of released exotic pets can impact wildlife.
- ▶ Pet turtles are thought to have transmitted a respiratory disease to gopher tortoises.



Reduce Pesticide Use



- ▶ Almost all wildlife species eat insects in some way.
- ▶ Wildlife, and even humans, are truly connected to insects.
- ▶ Most birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals eat insects
- ▶ Instead of broadcasting pesticides over a large area, spot treat or use baits that target one pest species.
- ▶ Practice IPM!!!!!!!



Expand the Scale of Habitat

- ▶ The required habitat for many species is much larger than what you could provide within your yard.
- ▶ Consider talking with your neighbors about creating larger wildlife habitat patches.
- ▶ The *combination* of several different yards with wildlife habitat will draw more species into the neighborhood and, thus, more to your yard



Designer Wildlife???



- ▶ You can't always pick and choose.
- ▶ Sometimes less desirable species will show up.
- ▶ Take the bad with the good (to a point).



Neighborhood Enhancements

- ▶ Enhanced Stormwater Detention Ponds
- ▶ “Green” areas
- ▶ Wildlife sanctuaries
- ▶ **Florida Bird Monitoring Program**
 - ▶ <http://bird.ifas.ufl.edu>



Florida's Bird Sanctuary

Program



Black Chinned Hummingbird

- ▶ Communities can be designated as bird sanctuaries to enhance environmental awareness
- ▶ For a housing subdivision, all that is needed is a majority vote.
 - ▶ Get publicity from a local newspaper
 - ▶ Put up signs
 - ▶ Contact the FWC

FWC

Bureau of Non-game Wildlife
Florida Wildlife Commission
620 S Meridian St.
Tallahassee, Fl. 32399-1600
<http://myfwc.com/>



Florida Wildlife Habitat Program

Certification Program:

- Apply through the wildlife extension web site
www.wec.ufl.edu/extension
- Participants describe current yard, wildlife seen and future landscaping plans
- We evaluate and make recommendations



Wet Detention Ponds



Where to Go for Info?

- ▶ Web site: www.wec.ufl.edu/extension
 - ▶ Print on demand
 - ▶ Links and information
 - ▶ Educational programs



- Call your local extension office
 - Call Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or visit www.state.fl.us/fwc

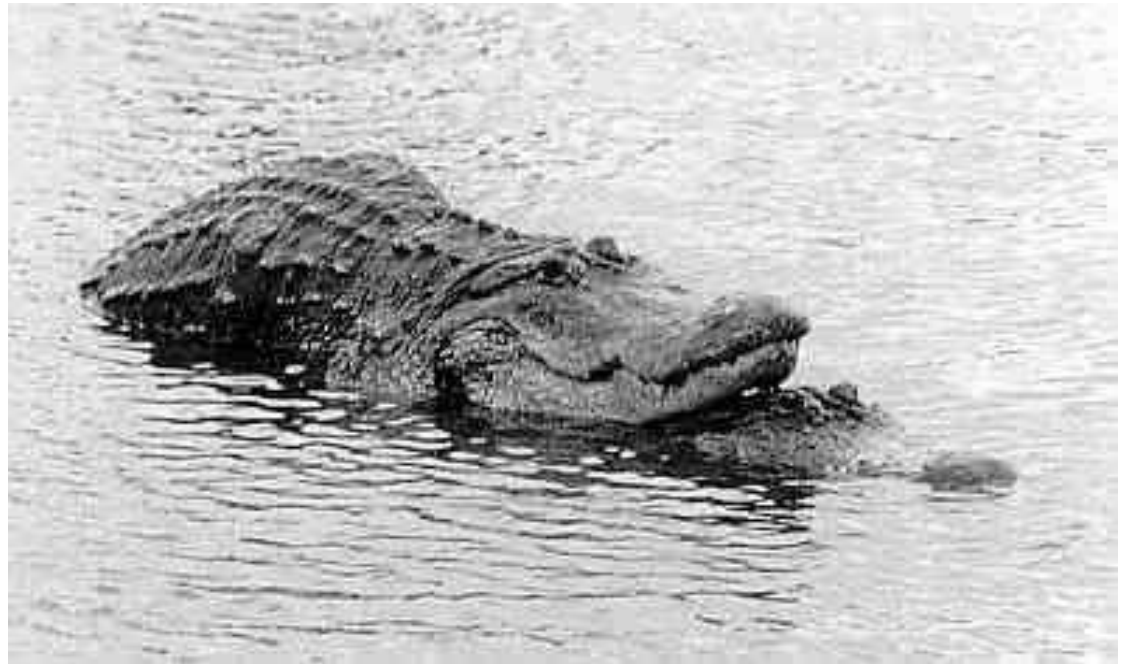
References

- ▶ Your Florida Backyard - <http://www.nsis.org/index.html>
- ▶ Florida Museum of Natural History - <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/>
- ▶ Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission - <http://myfwc.com/wildlife/>
- ▶ Univ. of Florida, EDIS - http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_Wildlife



Anhinga

THANK YOU!!!!



Go Gators!!!!

