

aqua-notes

An Equal Opportunity Institution

SOLUTIONS

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Mark your calendars...

- Aug 31, Sept 14, Oct 12, Nov 9. 6:30 pm. *Pushing the Limits* climate change-based book club. For more information, see <https://www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/pushing-limits-place-book-series>

More on back page!

Inside this issue:

Turtles	2
Recycling	3

Calling Citizen Scientists

UF/IFAS Extension has a new citizen science opportunity, and it needs your help! Readers might be aware that a beetle was introduced a couple of years ago to try and control air potato plants in Florida. Researchers are asking for people's help in tracking and reporting these beetles, as well as what is



happening to air potato populations around the state since the beetles were released. For more information on the project, or to get involved, you can check out <https://airpotatobeetle.com/>. Volunteers will be asked to watch some training videos, and take a short pre-test, then respond to email survey questions as those are sent out. There will also be a post-test later on in the project :)

M. P. McGuire

Maia McGuire, PhD
Marine Extension Agent

Exploring our Environment—Facing the Future

Many people have been asking when I am going to offer a new adult day camp. Now that the Florida Microplastic Awareness Project is up and running well, I have been able to organize a new class. “Exploring our Environment—Facing the Future” will be a 4-day class (October 30-November 2) taught at the GTMNERR building in the town of Marineland. The overarching theme of the program is climate change, although plastic pollution will also be a recurring theme. We will be discussing how our changing climate may affect future storm events, sea turtle biology, wildfire frequency and other topics. We will also be discussing possible ways that people and wildlife might mitigate for and adapt to these changes. A brochure for the class can be found on the Education page at <http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/sea/seagrant.htm>. Registration is \$125 and can be completed online at <https://eoe-facingthefuture.eventbrite.com>.



Land and Sea Turtles

The 2017 sea turtle nesting season in our area began in May. Typically, female sea turtles will crawl up onto the beach to lay their eggs overnight, taking advantage of the cooler temperatures. However, very occasionally they may nest in the daytime. Hatchling sea turtles also typically emerge from the nest during the night. However, rainfall can cool the sand temperatures, fooling the hatchlings into emerging during the daytime.



Gopher tortoise

Sometimes beachgoers might find a turtle on the beach, and be tempted to “help” it by putting it into the ocean. **THIS IS NOT A GOOD IDEA.** The gopher tortoise, which is a land animal, not an aquatic one, often lives in coastal dunes. Young or adult gopher tortoises are sometimes found on the beach. Gopher tortoises do not have paddle-like flippers. Instead, they have trunk-like legs. They are able to pull their head and legs inside their shell, which sea turtles cannot do. They cannot swim well. If they are placed in the water, they will probably drown. Gopher tortoises are considered threatened in Florida and are a protected species. They should never be placed in any water body.

Even sea turtles that are found on the beach should not be moved back into the ocean. All species of sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act. If an adult or young sea turtle washes up on a beach, it is probably weak because of injury or illness. If it is actively crawling up or down the beach (e.g. a nesting female or emerging hatchling), it should be allowed to do this on its own. Stranded live or dead sea turtles should be reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission by calling 1-888-404-3922. Trained individuals will then be able to respond and make a determination about what should be done with the stranded animal.



A washback loggerhead sea turtle

We are very fortunate to now have the Sea Turtle Hospital at UF Whitney Lab. This facility has three missions: rehabilitation, research and education. They are one of the few sea turtle hospitals that is permitted to treat turtles that are infected with the fibropapilloma virus. This virus causes sea turtles to have warty growths on their soft tissues. It is highly contagious to other sea turtles. Many of the hospital’s fibropapilloma patients also have injuries—from fishing line entanglement to boat strikes to fish hook ingestion. The goal of the hospital is to release these animals after successful rehabilitation. They often post information about these releases on their Facebook page. Because the sea turtle fibropapilloma virus is not well understood, research on it is needed. The hospital is partnering with research faculty at the Whitney Lab to address this need.

To learn more about the sea turtle hospital, visit <http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/sea-turtle-hospital/>. The Sea Turtle Hospital at Whitney Lab is now offering tours on the second and fourth Thursday of the month and second Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. The cost for these is \$15 per person. Reservations are required. There is a limit of 10 people per tour. To make a reservation, email turtletours@whitney.ufl.edu.

How much do you know about recycling?

Most of us probably feel pretty confident about our recycling IQ. I know I did, until I started to do some research into the topic. I was particularly interested in learning more about plastic recycling, because it's really hard to avoid plastic these days, and I wanted to make sure I was doing everything that I could to recycle things properly.

The first (and probably most important) thing that I learned is that even though many plastics are recyclable, that does not mean that they actually get recycled. This isn't because waste management companies don't try and sell the plastic products to recyclers, but that there is not a strong market for purchasing recyclable plastic. As a result, much of what is collected for recycling could ultimately end up in a landfill anyway. Another surprise for me was learning that most recyclable plastics can only be recycled one time. By comparison, metal and glass can be recycled an unlimited number of times. Paper products can generally be recycled five to seven times.

Some of you might have noticed that there are new recycling logos on many products. How2Recycle is a standardized labeling system that many manufacturers are utilizing. Instead of a simple recycling logo, this new labeling system adds a small amount of instructional text to help consumers better understand what can and cannot be recycled (and how/where.)

I do my best to reduce the amount of plastic waste that I generate. I don't buy plastic water bottles, use disposable drinking straws, and carry my own washable cold and hot drink containers, a washable food storage container and spork with me. However, there are many types of plastic packaging that are difficult to avoid. Many of these are plastic wrap that can actually be recycled if it is taken to a store that offers plastic bag recycling. Wrappers from paper towels or toilet paper, newspaper bags and even zipper-seal bags can all be recycled in this way. These plastic bags are used to make plastic/wood composite lumber, which is often used for boardwalks and picnic tables. These plastic films should not be put in curbside recycling bins—they will become tangled in the machines that sort the recycling. By the way, the paper tubes from toilet paper and paper towels can be recycled with your paper products.

Many plastic film items are not recyclable. The new recycling labels help clarify this. The image on the right is from a package of fruit cups. Notice that the label indicates that the paper packaging is recyclable, the plastic cups MAY be recyclable (depending on your local recycling program) and that the plastic film lid should be discarded. It also says to rinse the cup before recycling. This provides so much more information than the recycle logo with the number 7 which is on the plastic cup itself. The number tells what type of plastic the container was made from. Some resins are more commonly collected for recycling than others. This is what you might need to check with your local recycling program.



In general, containers that are set out for recycling should be rinsed, especially if they contained food products. This will help ensure that they will not attract vermin or produce noxious odors, and it can also make the recyclable items more valuable. There are certain types of products that cannot be recycled (e.g. multi-layer plastic pouches). The new recycling logos help to identify these products.

We're now on Facebook—check out [facebook.com/NEFLSeaGrant](https://www.facebook.com/NEFLSeaGrant) and “like” it to keep informed about coastal topics in the region. Don't have a Facebook account? That's OK—you can view the page without one :)

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More “Mark your calendars”

- Sept 12-23—Clay County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Upland Systems Course. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register.
- Sept 23, 10 am—2 pm—Estuary Fest at GTMNERR (Guana). For more information, see www.GTMNERR.org.
- Sept 23—10 am—2 pm; UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station grand opening! Cedar Key. See <https://www.facebook.com/events/509040469439102/> for more information.
- Sept 26-28—Nassau County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Conservation Science Special Topic. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register.
- Sept 28-30—Volusia County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Environmental Interpretation Special Topic. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register.
- Sept 29-Oct 3—Volusia County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Freshwater Systems Course. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register. CLASS IS FULL—contact the instructor to be added to the waiting list.
- Oct 6-Nov 10—Volusia County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Coastal Systems Course. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register. CLASS IS FULL—contact the instructor to be added to the waiting list.
- Nov 28-Dec 7—Nassau County. Florida Master Naturalist Program-Freshwater Systems Course. See www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu for more information or to register.

Please check the calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu> for other environmental education programs

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The Foundation for The Gator Nation

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