



Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida

P.O. Box 1122 Panama City, FL 32402
(850) 381-7500 Email: bcc@comcast.net

Fall 2023 Newsletter
www.baycountyconservancy.org

Cuban Treefrogs: An Invasive Threat

Few soundscapes characterize the Gulf Coast better than a chorus of green treefrogs, *Hyla cinerea*, on a muggy summer evening in Florida. That sound can drown out the traffic on Beach Drive at our Mary Ola Reynolds Miller Palm Preserve!

However, sometimes a different call can be heard. A solitary call. That call is of the invasive Cuban treefrog. The Cuban treefrog, *Osteopilus septentrionalis*, is not native to the United States. Cuban treefrogs are native to Cuba, the Cayman Islands, and Bahamas. They first arrived in Florida as stowaways on merchant ships in the 1920s. They are adapted to living in urban and suburban areas alongside humans and benefit from nighttime lighting and the animals they attract. The species outcompetes and even eats other species of treefrogs. Not much eats it as it secretes a mucous that can be noxious and cause skin irritation in humans if touched or make a pet sick if it eats it. Many neighborhoods in south Florida have seen their diverse populations of native treefrog species disappear and be replaced with communities of almost entirely one species. Their range is expanding further north in Florida and has finally arrived in the panhandle.



The Bay County Conservancy is piloting an invasive species project targeting Cuban treefrogs. It utilizes citizen science resources from the University of Florida Wildlife-Johnson Lab. **Carrie Fioramonti**, member of the Board of Directors of Bay County Conservancy and trained biologist is overseeing the project. She and other volunteers deployed six (6) humane traps at the Mary Ola Reynolds Miller Palm Preserve in downtown Panama City and have been monitoring the traps twice per week. Preliminary data from spring suggests that green, squirrel, and Cuban treefrogs all inhabit the area. As of late June, three (3) Cuban treefrogs have been removed from the preserve and either taken as a pet or humanely euthanized. During this same time two (2) squirrel treefrogs were also observed as well as a clump of amphibian eggs in the inundated depression area. We will soon find out the species of those tadpoles!

In late summer and early autumn, Bay County Conservancy will be hosting a BioBlitz that will be advertised to members and open to the general public. You do not have to wait until then to visit the Mary Ola Reynolds Miller Palm Preserve. Come to enjoy the delightful native plant garden created and maintained in partnership with the **Sweetbay Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society** and dedicated volunteers, **Teresa Nooney** and **Susan Lorca**. Have lunch on the picnic table, stroll through on your way to The Gallery of Art, or grab your sketch journal or camera and capture memories of the colorful blooms this Fall! If you are lucky, maybe you will spot a treefrog and, hopefully, it is a native!

-Carrie Fioramonti

Key characteristics of Invasive Cuban treefrogs:

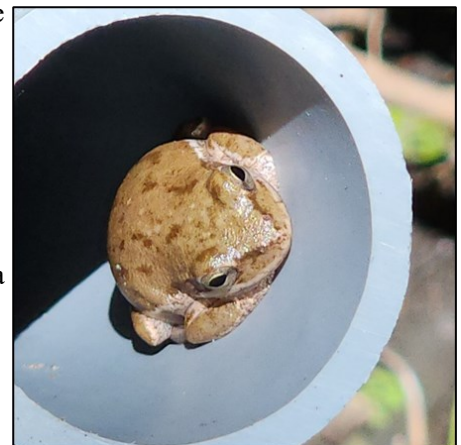
Fused skull and warty skin

Enlarged toe pads

Colors are highly variable—green, grey, brownish, even white; will have a yellow area where fore and hind limbs meet under the body

Good source of information: **The Cuban Treefrog in Florida**

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/uw259>



St. George Island Partnership

BCC has a policy of keeping its preserves open to the public for quiet recreation such as nature study unless there is a good reason to restrict visitation. Use is limited to daylight hours except when special permission is granted for nighttime use. But a special situation has arisen at St. George Plantation on St. George Island in Franklin County.

The Plantation is a sizeable gated residential development, and BCC has partnered with the HOA to preserve two lots for open space within the community. These two lots contain a large percentage of wetlands, so the owners gave up on trying to squeeze houses into the upland portions of the lots and decided to enhance the natural beauty of the area by donating the lots to BCC, to be managed by the HOA.

Tully Park was donated in 2014 and is managed as a park, with picnic table and observation deck. It is adjacent to state land called Nick's Hole and overlooks a wide expanse of salt marsh.

S.E.M. Dozier Coastal Preserve, named after the donor's grandchildren, contains a grove of pine trees that were once tapped for turpentine production. It was donated in 2022 and will be maintained in its natural state. So, even though these preserves are not open to the general public, they will provide enjoyment for many residents and visitors to St. George Island!

-Candis Harbison



Grave Matters

When Candis Harbison, Ron Houser and I set out for the Hazel and Herselle Wilderness Preserve this past Spring to do some cleanup work, we wondered if we even had a chance at making much of a difference. The property is off the beaten track about 6 miles south of Blountstown in Calhoun County. Hurricane Michael brought many trees down back in 2018, and we also knew we had a problem with invasive Chinese Tallow (aka Popcorn) trees and Japanese climbing fern.

But one of the driving forces at Hazel and Herselle is the fact that there is an abandoned cemetery on the preserve – one in danger of being swallowed up by fast-growing sweetgum trees and vines. And so we drove out to Wood Cemetery Road with our loppers and herbicide sprayers to see if we could at least clear away some of the foliage from the remaining headstones and perhaps kill off a popcorn tree or two.



Old neglected cemeteries carry an aura about them; there is a feeling that one should whisper and just absorb the moment. Many of the headstones are markers for infants and young children. And, as evidenced by the short adult lifespans etched into the other stones, life was obviously much, much harder back in the late 1800s/early 1900s.

We cleared away brush for several hours in the cemetery. We made some progress hacking away sweetgums and briars and sprayed about 50 popcorn trees. Perhaps we paid homage, in a way, to a few folks who once lived and died in this corner of the Florida panhandle.

-Teresa Nooney

Publix Lends Many Helping Hands



Never underestimate the abilities of **Publix Supermarket volunteers!** We were extremely thankful to have had the help of employees from the **23rd Street and Breakfast Point Publix** stores at our [Air Potato Roundup 2023](#) this past March. This crew joined us in hacking tangled vines and trudging through swampy ground on a section of Audubon Nature Preserve. By morning's end, they had helped us pick up and dispose of almost 100lbs of invasive air potato bulbils. If left in the leaf litter, these bulbils would sprout and rapidly grow into vines that smother our native vegetation. Way to go!

BCC's next work day was at the [Oltz Family Preserve](#) in Lynn Haven. This property was heavily damaged during Hurricane Michael. We'd hoped to make some headway clearing trees and brush to start another length of walking trail there. The enthusiastic, hard-working group from the **Lynn Haven and Thomas**

Drive Publix stores powered through and cleared a whole section of trail for us. We cannot thank you enough!

BCC would also like to thank **all our volunteers**—those who have been with us for years—and those who have just started to pitch in. Every hour of your time spent with us is greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in receiving email notifications about upcoming workdays (in cooler weather!) please send a message to Teresa: nooneyt1963@gmail.com, and we'll add your name to our Volunteer List.



Bay County Conservancy's Property Manager on the Job

"I moved to Alaska when I was 26 years old so I could experience access to the most true wilderness. Since then, I have enjoyed being able to make consistent contact with nature wherever I was as much as possible. Lately, being able to assist the BCC with working on the Parks and Preserves for the last seven months has been a pleasure. I wish I had better experience doing the specific tasks that need to be done, but I have received excellent training and advice from numerous members. One thing I do these hot, humid days this summer is take a break as soon as I begin to feel the impact of excessive heat, and soak myself from the waist up with ice cold water. One day it will get easier, but today, it is all still doable."

- **Bob Nixon**



Hummingbird Feeding Tips



Make your own sugar water by boiling 4 cups of water and dissolving 1 cup sugar. After it cools a bit, refrigerate in a glass jar. Never use red food coloring; the birds don't need it. When refilling feeders with cold sugar water, let it come to room temperature before placing it back outside. Be sure to clean your feeders and refill regularly, especially during the summer. I use a small brush to clean the feeder holes. You can get these and any other feeder supplies at Wild Birds Unlimited in town. If you have more than one hummingbird feeder, place them on opposite sides of your house to limit territorial fighting among the birds. Leave your feeders up all year. It's been determined that this will not prevent hummingbirds from migrating when they should, and you may get a rare stray bird from the west if you do this.

-**Ron Houser**

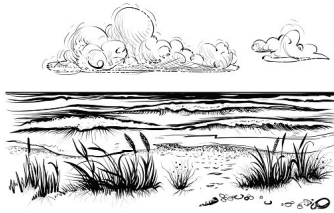
Buff-bellied hummingbird, Nov. 2022, Callaway. *(photo Teresa Nooney)*

BCC Welcomes New Board Member Mark Hyman

After a career as a civilian doing hydromechanics research for the Navy, Mark has been spending his free time building boats and volunteering with The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, primarily with its West Bay Oyster Reef and Seagrass Restoration project but also on other, similar projects in the St. Andrews Bay system. He is also on the science advisory group with the St Andrews Bay, St. Joe Bay Estuary Program.

While Mark brings lots of enthusiasm for conservation to the Bay County Conservancy, he claims he has “virtually no knowledge of plants, birds or other land animals!” However, he is looking forward to learning!

Mark is aided by his wife, Cheryl Flax-Hyman, who works at Gulf Coast State College and by his children, Challen and McKenna who are pursuing their own careers in Marine Science and Public Health.



Juniper Headwaters Work Day



Above: **Robert Wheeler, Nancy Harris, and Jerry Harris** get ready to work on the trail at Juniper Headwaters Preserve in Fountain.

Below: **Pam Overmyer's** expertise with a tractor was invaluable in clearing downed logs and debris off the trails.



Volunteers, watch your email boxes: We will soon be scheduling another work day at Juniper Headwaters Preserve!

Board of Directors & Staff

President

Candis Harbison

Vice President

Jacalyn Kolk, Esq.

Treasurer

Carolyn Parell

Executive Assistant

Teresa Nooney

Members at Large

Ron Houser

Joseph Parell, M.D.

Ted Wilson, M.D.

John Bente

Brian Dusseault, Esq.

Bonnie Blue

Lisa Tubridy

Carrie Fioramonti

Mark Hyman, PhD

Property Manager

Bob Nixon

Mission Statement: The Bay County Conservancy is a land trust dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Northwest Florida.

BCC Membership Form



Yes! I want to help the Bay County Conservancy - *The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida*— save open space, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



Name: _____

Level: (circle one): \$25-\$49 Contributor

Address: _____

\$50-\$199 Supporter

\$200-\$999 Benefactor

\$1,000+ Lifetime

Please mail this form to: Bay County Conservancy, P.O. Box 1122 Panama City, FL 32402