Central Region Update

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1. FMNP 2011 in Review

Amidst many challenges, 2011 proved to be a good year for the Florida Master Naturalist Program. Although the number of core module course graduates decreased slightly from 947 in 2010 to 941, the total number of program graduates increased by 5.6% (982 in 2010 vs. 1,037 this year) thanks in part to those who completed special topics courses, as well as a larger average class size. Enrollment in special topics courses more than doubled this year with 96 course graduates, up from 35 in 2010. This is certainly a trend that we would like to see continue.

While enrollment and course completion grew for the 10th straight year, the number of courses offered actually decreased from 68 in 2010 to 64. 2011, unfortunately, saw more course cancellations than any previous year. As we continue to face difficult economic times, it is important that we continue to work together to overcome the obstacles that such a situation presents in order to grow the FMNP and fulfill our mission. The beginning of the new year brings with it a reminder that we are here to help you, instructors, students and supporters alike, in any way that we can to ensure that 2012 becomes the most successful year yet for the FMNP!

Happy New Year and Thank You for All of Your Hard Work and Dedication!

2. 2011 FMNP Annual Student Survey

Student Survey Responses Help Us Improve the FMNP!

Those of you who took an FMNP course during 2011 should have received an email invitation to complete the 2011 FMNP Annual Student Survey. The information gathered from the survey is crucial to improving the FMNP and furthering our mission.

If you have not already done so, please take a moment to complete the survey—it should take no more than 10-15 minutes of your time. In the optional "Success Stories and Comments" section you can share your unique experiences with the program, as well as what you liked, what you didn't like and how we can make the program better. If you did not receive the email invitation or no longer have it, but wish to complete the survey, please contact Heather at info@masternaturalist.org.

The deadline to complete the survey is January 20, 2012

3. Florida SEE Ecotour Assessors

Florida SEE Needs Trained Ecotour Assessors In Your Community!

The Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism is a non-profit educational organization incorporated to establish and maintain a professional code of ecotourism ethics in order to encourage an awareness and appreciation of Florida's natural and cultural history.

Florida SEE launched a state-wide Ecotour Provider Certification/Recognition Program in June of 2011. To implement the program, Florida SEE needs trained individuals to assess organizations by conducting site visits and participating in tours and is asking FMNP graduates to assist.

The Florida SEE Assessor Training is FREE and all site visits and tour fees will be reimbursed by Florida SEE. Trained Assessors need to be Florida SEE members. For information on the overall Certification Program and general membership, go to: www.floridasee.org

Assessor Training:

What: Training will include an overview of the Florida SEE mission, history and purpose. Florida SEE will train you on the new Certification Program, as well as on procedures for assessing applicants. Assessors will need to provide proof of their personal vehicle insurance and be willing to complete at least one assessment per year.

When: The 90-minute Florida See Assessor Training will take place via webinar on **Saturday, January 21, 2012 from 10:00 to 11:30 am.**

To RSVP: Contact Joy Hazell at (239) 533-7518 or joyhazell@floridasee.org

4. UF IFAS and FWC Request Assistance with Fox Squirrel Study

Have You Seen Me?!

The University of Florida IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have launched a new research project to examine the distribution of fox squirrels in Florida.

The fox squirrel, aptly named for its fox-like tail, is a large squirrel that is approximately twice the size of the common gray squirrel. Fox squirrel coloration is highly variable, ranging from creamy tan to all black, and many gradations in between. In Florida the fox squirrel can be found in almost every county, however, their distribution patterns are not well understood.

Members of the public across the state are asked to report fox squirrel sightings. Reports can be made at: https://public.myfwc.com/hsc/foxsquirrel/GetLatLong.aspx.

If you have questions about the project ,please contact Courtney Hooker at foxsquirrel@ifas.ufl.edu.

5. Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail - Call for Rural Site Nominations

The FWC's Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) is pleased to announce a new rural county initiative. To assist Florida's rural counties and Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC) with their nature-based tourism efforts, the FWC plans to add new sites to the Birding and Wildlife Trail network. Nominations are being accepted for sites located in Florida's 32 rural and RACEC counties. For more information about this project and to download an application form, please visit the GFBWT website's nomination page.

Visitors from around the world come to Florida to see our unique wildlife and exceptional scenic places! All of Florida's counties offer great wildlife viewing opportunities. Nominate one of your county's outstanding wild places today! The nomination period will remain open until February 10, 2012.

For more information contact:
Birding and Wildlife Trail Coordinator
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
620 S. Meridian St., Tallahassee, FL 32399(850) 488-9478; GFBT AT MyFWC.com

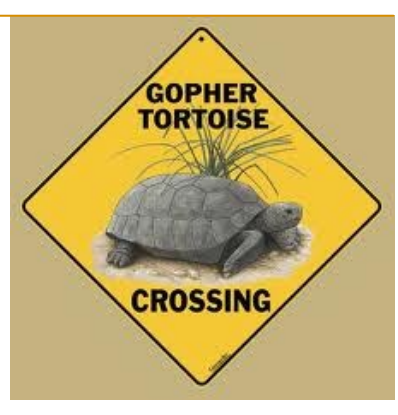
6. Instructor's Corner

Receive a Free FMNP T-Shirt if We Publish Your Class Activity, Exercise or Tip in Our Newsletter!

Help us provide information that may be useful to other instructors in this section each month. We want to know about any activities, exercises or tips that you have incorporated into your FMNP classes that have enhanced the learning experience of your students. Submissions can be emailed to info@masternaturalist.org. Please include your name, mailing address and t-shirt size (men's or women's).

7. Area Programs & Events

Intro to Gopher Tortoise Monitoring Workshop



When: January 19, 2012
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Please click here for a tentative schedule of activities.

Where: Forever Florida, Osceola County
4755 N. Kenansville Rd.
St. Cloud, FL 34773

Cost: Free

Lunch on site ($13.64/person, non-veg and vegetarian options available)

Optional Eco Safari activities available for a fee (*must be reserved prior to event and payment required upon reservation, call (407) 957-9794 and specify you are with the "Intro to Wildlife Monitoring" group to reserve*):

- Coach Tour $25/person
- Cypress Canopy Tour $35/person
- Zipline $70/person

Overnight accommodations are available ($10/person): bunkhouse, indoor bathrooms, showers, and breakfast. *RSVP by January 12, 2012.*

Register online at http://monitorwildlife.eventbrite.com by January 12, 2012, or call Eleanor Foerste (321) 697-3000 or Kelly Wagner (407) 433-5484 to register.

Advertise your events here!

Do you have an event or program that might be of interest to FMNP instructors or grads?
Send details to us at info@masternaturalist.org.

Announcements must be received no later than the 15th of the month prior to your event.

8. Orange County Freshwater Wetlands Class

April 18-May 23, 2012
Registration closes February 16, 2012
(Course Code: fw12-02)
Course schedule

Register

Facility Information
UF/IFAS Orange County Extension Office
6021 South Conway Road, Orlando, FL 32812

Instructor Information
Jennifer Ramos
Assistant Instructor: Peggy
Organization: Orange County Extension Service
Phone: 407-254-9224
Fax: 407-850-5125
Email: jennifer.ramos@ocfl.net
Web Site: http://orange.ifas.ufl.edu/

9. Orange County Upland Habitats Class

February 23-March 29, 2012
Registration closes February 16, 2012
(Course Code: uh12-07)
Course schedule

Register

Facility Information
UF/IFAS Orange County Extension Office
6021 South Conway Road, Orlando, FL 32812

Instructor Information
Jennifer Ramos
Assistant Instructor: Peggy
Organization: Orange County Extension Service
Phone: 407-254-9224
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Contact

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