



Indian River Land Trust

Conserving Land and Water

LANDMARKS

Winter 2024

The Impact of Your Support! Protecting Land Along the St. Sebastian River

In October 2023, the Indian River Land Trust acquired a unique conservation property, adding 36 additional acres to its portfolio of protected green space in Indian River County. In keeping with the Land Trust's recently adopted Strategic Plan and expanded reach across Indian River County, this is the first natural area protected by the Land Trust off the Indian River Lagoon. The property is located on the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River, along the southwestern border of the City of Sebastian. The St. Sebastian River is home to manatee, alligator, the prehistoric garfish, important bird rookeries, and species of globally rare fish. It is the only natural tributary of the Lagoon in the county, which amplifies its conservation value to the Land Trust. Like our beloved Lagoon, the St. Sebastian River and its surrounding lands are in need of our protection.

The property contains an *Old Florida* cypress forest that stood long before the cities of Sebastian and Vero Beach were incorporated. A portion of the property was formerly a citrus grove, but now

contains 22 acres of native oak trees and cabbage palms that have replaced the orange trees. The remaining 14 acres encompass mature cypress trees with 1,600 feet of river frontage.

The Land Trust hopes that this property will be the spark to fulfill a long-imagined greenway trail. With this acquisition, plans have resumed for a scenic nature trail along the river between Route 510 and Route 512. This area was designated by the County as the St. Sebastian River Greenway in 2006. The effort to obtain this designation was originally spearheaded by the Land Trust, and interest in this project remains strong today. Working together with municipal and county leaders and other local non-profits such as the Friends of the St. Sebastian River, the Environmental Learning Center, and the Marine Resources Council, the Land Trust hopes to see this vision realized. Connecting the community to nature remains a critical goal for the Land Trust. With your support, these types of dreams become reality. Thank you!

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INDIAN RIVER LAND TRUST

thanks everyone

**WHO SPONSORED OUR ANNUAL BENEFIT ON
NOVEMBER 9, 2023.**



**By supporting this event, you are Protecting our
Waterways, Open Spaces, and Green Places!**



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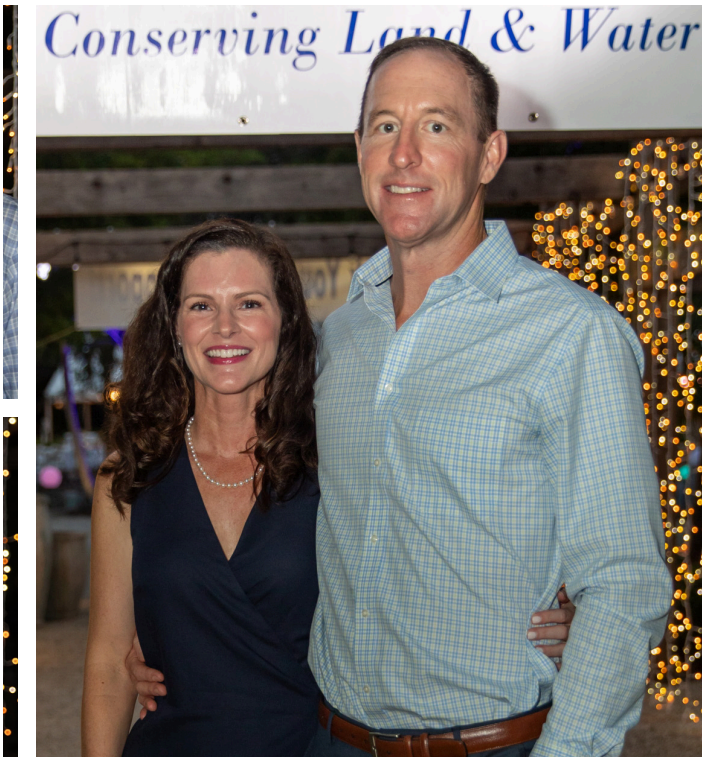
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*For more photos, please visit the events section of our website at www.irlt.org

VOLUNTEERS HELP CONNECT OUR COMMUNITY TO NATURE!

Volunteer Spotlight: Tommye and Rody Johnson



Vero Beach is a unique place, full of history, natural beauty, and amazing people. Tommye and Rody Johnson are two of those amazing people. Together, they have been supporting the Land Trust as faithful members and volunteers since 2012. Their combined passion for our local environment led them to become volunteer nature tour guides at the Land Trust's Bee Gum Point Preserve. Prior to its acquisition by the Land Trust, the 111-acre property was one of the last unprotected wetlands on the barrier island and Rody grew up fishing on the property as a child. It was Rody's love for this property that first encouraged him and Tommye to volunteer as guides for the Land Trust.

Due to its location along the Atlantic Flyway, a major corridor for migrating birds, the Preserve is managed as a bird sanctuary, where regular bird watching and nature tours are held. Without volunteers like Tommye and Rody, the Land Trust would not be able to provide these types of tours for the public to enjoy. Tommye and Rody are the first to volunteer when extra help is needed on the property. They've waded through muck to tag juvenile snook and tarpon for research, collected water quality data, and planted native plants to improve wildlife habitat, all while never missing an opportunity to lead a guided tour of this special property. Many thanks to Tommye and Rody for their faithful support of IRLT!

REMEMBERING TWO OF OUR OWN

The Land Trust lost two steadfast supporters and outstanding Board members in 2023. William C. Buck passed away on March 29th and Georgia Welles passed away on August 3rd. Both Bill and Georgia were incredibly passionate about protecting our natural world. Georgia first became a member of the Land Trust Board in 2009 and remained engaged for nearly 15 years while also serving on the global Board of The Nature Conservancy for many years. Georgia was an early voice for ensuring the Land Trust had the funds needed to forever care for and maintain our conservation properties. Bill joined the Board in 2012, and stayed deeply involved for more than a decade, co-chairing the Land Trust's successful campaign to Protect the Land that Protects the Lagoon, and leading the Land Trust's effort to eliminate residential septic systems that are polluting the Indian River Lagoon. Bill and Georgia will be inducted as Directors Emeriti posthumously later this winter. They will be sorely missed by everyone whose lives they touched.

ENGAGE, PARTICIPATE, LEARN ON LAND TRUST PROPERTIES

Thanks to a dedicated group of volunteer guides, our Birding and Conservation Tours return for another exciting season with more dates and locations! To learn more or to RSVP, visit our website for the most up-to-date information. All tours are free and open to the public, **BUT RSVPS ARE REQUIRED IN ADVANCE.**

Volunteers also help our land stewardship staff with property clean-ups and invasive plant removals. We hope you will consider joining us for one of these fun days too! **RSVPS ARE REQUIRED.**

Questions? Call the office: 772-794-0701 or visit www.irlt.org for more info.
Tours made possible by Rehmann

Rehmann
EMPOWER YOUR PURPOSE®

BIRDING TOURS

7:00AM

02/01

THURSDAY

Lagoon Greenway

02/10

SATURDAY

Bee Gum Point

02/29

THURSDAY

Lagoon Greenway

03/09

SATURDAY

Bee Gum Point

03/28

THURSDAY

Lagoon Greenway

04/03

WEDNESDAY

Bee Gum Point

04/13

SATURDAY

Bee Gum Point

CONSERVATION TOURS

10:00AM

02/08

THURSDAY

Oyster Bar Marsh

02/14

WEDNESDAY

Bee Gum Point

02/20

TUESDAY

Toni Robinson
Waterfront Trail

02/27

TUESDAY

Spoonbill Marsh
*County Owned Facility

03/07

THURSDAY

Oyster Bar Marsh

03/13

WEDNESDAY

Bee Gum Point

03/19

TUESDAY

Toni Robinson
Waterfront Trail

04/11

THURSDAY

Oyster Bar Marsh

VOLUNTEER CLEAN-UPS

9:30AM

02/02

FRIDAY

Invasive Plant Removal
Toni Robinson
Waterfront Trail

03/01

FRIDAY

Invasive Plant Removal
Lagoon Greenway

03/15

FRIDAY

Invasive Plant Removal
Toni Robinson
Waterfront Trail

**DUE TO LIMITED SPACE,
RSVP IS REQUIRED FOR
ALL IRLT EVENTS.**

**Reserve Online www.irlt.org
Call Ahead 772-794-0701**

Protect the lagoon, support a local business and treat yourself or someone you love to a night off of cooking!

Stay at Home Fundraiser

Beginning February 2024 - April 30, 2024

IRLT is pleased to partner with Ryder's Gourmet Market on Cardinal Drive for our annual Stay at Home Fundraiser.



Please send us _____ certificates at \$150.00 each. Certificates are valid until June 15, 2024.

Each certificate includes the following from Ryder's daily selection:

- Dinner and dessert for two
- A bottle of wine from the IRLT Collection

Payment information:

- ☐ By check payable to Indian River Land Trust
- ☐ By credit card as follows:

Total Amount \$: _____ Card #: _____
CVV: _____ Expires: _____ Billing Zip: _____
Name: _____ Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Signature: _____

Please visit www.irlt.org for more information

Thank you! You will receive your certificates and donation receipt by mail.

Reserve your certificate by April 30, 2024.



SIP AND SHOP February 23, 2024

at J. McLaughlin in the Village Shops,
6210 FL-A1A

A portion of every purchase made at this J. McLaughlin location on February 23rd will go back to support the Indian River Land Trust.

Special thanks to J. McLaughlin and all of you for the many ways you help our efforts to conserve land and water resources in Indian River County.



LAND STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

The organization's land stewardship staff have been busier than ever, working on numerous Land Trust properties. It is anticipated that construction will begin on the Living Classroom at Coastal Oaks Preserve in 2024. The facilities will support education and research activities at the Preserve where the Junior Scientist Fellows Program being conducted with Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute is in its 10th year.

Thanks to some recent generous donations, plans are being carried out for a spacious observation platform on one of the ponds at Bee Gum Point Preserve, and for an eye-catching array of interpretive signs at Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail which will complement recent tree planting, bird and bat boxes, and a new osprey nesting platform. Look for them at the Land Trust membership event this March.

Over the past year, staff coordinated dozens of enthusiastic volunteers and experienced contractors to rid properties of garbage and invasive plants, while important research on the geological history of Lagoon-front properties and on the fisheries of IRLT's coastal wetlands continued to reveal fascinating results.

Lastly, we are eager for the challenge of stewarding the Land Trust's newly-acquired St. Sebastian River property, representing a markedly different habitat than what is found along the Lagoon. It is truly an exciting time at the Land Trust!



WE'VE PLANTED NEW ROOTS!

The Indian River Land Trust has moved! Our new office is located at 3150 Cardinal Drive, Suite 201 (on the corner of Cardinal Drive and Bougainvillea Lane).

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the local businesses listed below for their extraordinary generosity and in-kind contributions to the preparation of our new office.

Natalie Holtom Interiors
Distinctive Painting
Paul Can Do
Jetson TV & Appliance
Snider's Window Decor
Aiello Landscape

We invite you to come by to see our new space. Give us a call at 772-794-0701 to arrange a visit!



WHAT'S THAT BIRD?

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology wants to help you answer that question. In 2014, the Lab launched Merlin, an app that acts as a field guide in your pocket. Merlin offers quick identification assistance for bird watchers and nature lovers of all levels and aims to help you learn about the birds in any country around the world. With Indian River County being in the Atlantic Flyway, we get to enjoy many special bird visitors during migration each year.

This free global birding guide can identify mystery birds by using Sound ID technology. The app "listens" to the birds around you, and provides you with real-time suggestions for what species of birds are calling. The best part is that it works completely offline, so you can use Merlin anywhere in the world. You can also snap a photo of a bird and load it into the app for identification help. As you hit the trails this year, we hope that you'll download this fun and easy-to-use app to enhance your experience. Apple and Android users can download the app in either the Apple App Store or in Google Play.



Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab 4+

Identify Birds You See & Hear

Cornell University

Designed for iPhone

#36 in Reference

★★★★★ 4.9 • 76.6K Ratings

Free

WELCOMING NEW STAFF


The Land Trust is pleased to announce the addition of a new staff member. Loreto Murray joined the Land Trust as the Assistant Director of Philanthropy back in October. Loreto has extensive experience in the non-profit world and a deep appreciation and love for the natural spaces that surround us. She is excited to be part of the Land Trust team to join our efforts to protect and preserve the beauty of our natural world for generations to come.



A photograph of a white and tan motorboat, identified as 'SLIMBERTONE 34', partially submerged in a body of water. The boat is tilted and appears to be in a state of disrepair. In the background, there is a dense line of green mangrove trees under a clear blue sky. The water is dark and calm.

REPORTING DERELICT BOATS IN OUR LAGOON

Derelict boats in our Indian River Lagoon, like the one above that was removed from Land Trust Property, are both an eyesore and a hazard for boaters, sea life, and water quality. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) is the state agency responsible for investigating derelict vessels in the Indian River Lagoon and other waterways such as the St. Sebastian River. Eventually, the vessels are removed and disposed by County contractors and the costs are reimbursed by FWC.

A decorative circular graphic on the left side of the page, featuring a green leaf-like shape inside a blue and white circular border.

Florida law defines derelict vessels as those left in a wrecked, junked or substantially dismantled condition upon any public waters of the state. The process to remove them involves owner contact, notices, and sometimes court proceedings, which can take a year or more to complete. The best way to ensure a derelict vessel will be removed is to consult the FWC online resource at <https://myfwc.com/boating/waterway/derelict-vessels/>. This site contains a link to an interactive map that shows the status of reported vessels and where they are in the removal process. It helps to have a photo and a GPS location (latitude & longitude) of the vessel you have identified to compare to the FWC data. If the vessel does not appear on the website, you can call the number at the bottom of the FWC webpage to report it. Your concern for the health of the Lagoon is greatly appreciated!



☎ 772-794-0701
✉ info@irilt.org
🌐 www.irilt.org

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