



Winter 2015

# Landmarks

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## A Gift of Land Expands IRLT Conservation Area

In December the Land Trust received an outright gift of 11.6 acres of important conservation land, donated by long-time IRLT supporters: Warren and Virginia Schwerin. This property, which adjoins the Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail, expands this conservation area to over 50 acres and eliminates potential commercial development along US Hwy 1 next to the trail. The property is a buffer for critical coastal wetlands on the Indian River Lagoon and provides a number of options for recreation, education and habitat restoration. The property abuts two fresh water wetlands owned by IRLT and drains into a native mangrove forest to the southeast.

The generous gift from Warren and Virginia is a great example of how the Land Trust can expand its conservation efforts along the Lagoon without having to raise additional funds to achieve its goals. A landowner who donates property to the Land Trust can often claim a federal income tax deduction for the gift.

## IRLT Acquires Island Property

The Land Trust acquired a 15-acre island which is the final piece of the Lost Tree Island Archipelago located in the Town of Indian River Shores. The County owns the majority of the archipelago which was purchased together with the City of Vero Beach and the Town of Indian River Shores. This newly acquired property, named Cove Island by the Land Trust, was purchased by IRLT to help maintain the scenic quality of this island chain as seen from the Barber Bridge. Additionally, it will protect and preserve important bird habitat along the Atlantic Flyway, an important coastal corridor for millions of migrating birds. Over the last four years, the Land Trust has acquired nearly 350 acres of Lagoon shoreline immediately north and west of the Lost Tree Islands and now holds 925 acres, including eight and one half miles of lagoon shoreline, in conservation.



Cove Island



Donated Land



# Meet:

## Dr. Aaron Adams

### The Land Trust is Giving Back to the Community

In honor of the Land Trust's 25th Anniversary, the Board and staff are committed to giving back to the community in 25 ways. Funds being raised through IRLT's Annual Appeal are being used to fund activities to benefit both residents and visitors of Indian River County.

Over the past two months the Land Trust staff has spent two afternoons with the youth from Gifford Youth Achievement Center. One bright afternoon the Land Trust staff along with Vero Beach Geo-Cachers searched for treasures along the Lagoon Greenway. Geo-caching is an outdoor recreational activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) mobile device to hide and seek hidden containers called "geocaches," containing prizes.

Then on a windy January afternoon staff hosted a bike tour. The children rode bikes provided by Orchid Island Bikes and Kayaks along the three-mile trail system through oak forests, over wetlands and along the Indian River Lagoon and experienced the natural habitats of the Lagoon Greenway.

Other ways IRLT is giving back to the community include enhancing the entrance to Bee Gum Point, refreshing the landscaping and trails, and installing bike racks and benches on properties for the enjoyment of visitors.

Dr. Adams is the Director of Operations for Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) and a Research Associate Professor at Florida Institute of Technology. He has lived, worked, and fished on both coasts of the U.S., as well as throughout the Caribbean, where he has been conducting fish research for more than 25 years.

His pursuit of sustainable fisheries and habitat conservation are rooted in his years growing up near Chesapeake Bay, where he witnessed the decline of the Bay's habitats and fisheries. Aaron's scientific focus is on applied research with conservation implications (from coral reef to recreational species), with particular interest in fish habitat ecology. In his work with Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, he creates the strategy for, oversees, and executes BTT's collaborative efforts as a science-based conservation organization to apply research findings to conservation needs for coastal fisheries. In addition to more than thirty research publications, Aaron spends considerable effort translating science into fishermen's terms, and has authored three books, co-authored one book (and is working on a second co-authored book). He has also written many magazine articles, and has been part of TV programs applying fish science to recreational fishing and fish conservation.



*Thanks to the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust for their donation to Dr. Adams for a graduate research assistant to facilitate the fish studies in Bee Gum Point. Many thanks to the Trust and Dr. Adams!*





## Green Team Spruces up Lagoon Greenway

Wind and rain did not stop the Wells Fargo Green Team and Indian River Land Trust staff and volunteers from making important improvements to the trails and trailhead of the Lagoon Greenway. Twenty-two volunteers, mostly Wells Fargo employees from the Treasure Coast region, spread more than 150 cubic yards of mulch along 500 feet of soggy, muddy trail, filled five large bags of garbage along the Lagoon shoreline, and cut down vines and other invasive plants choking the native vegetation to make room for a butterfly garden at the trailhead and parking area.

This volunteer event was another way Wells Fargo gives back to the community. In the fall, Wells Fargo presented a \$40,000 check to the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute and the Indian River Land Trust for the continuation of their Junior Scientist Fellows partnership program. Harbor Branch scientist and Junior Scientist Program coordinator, Dr. Dennis Hanisak joined the effort to rake and spread the mulch in the rain. Hanisak commented, "I'm glad to help the Land Trust make these improvements for the greater community and to lend a hand to the Green Team."

Indian River County, a partner in the Lagoon Greenway project, provided the mulch and wheelbarrows for the volunteer effort.

**If you are  
interested in  
volunteering,  
there are many  
opportunities both  
in the office and  
on the land. Look  
on our Website  
or Contact us  
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Years of  
Conservation

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of Trevor Smith  
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Narrows Marsh part of the Bridge View Property



Measuring water chemistry on Bee Gum Point

## Land Stewardship Critical for Lagoon

The Land Trust, in acquiring more than 925 acres along the Indian River Lagoon over the last five years, has protected critical coastal wetlands and pristine oak hammocks from residential and commercial development. IRLT also created a unique opportunity to help protect the Lagoon by studying and caring for these important lands in relation to this diverse estuary. That's why the Land Trust is completing management plans for twelve blocks of conservation areas, ranging in size from 4 acres to 190 acres. The management plans will be finished this winter, allowing the Board and staff to identify and prioritize scientific-based restoration projects that will help to re-establish important fish and bird populations and improve the water quality along the Lagoon.



Monitoring fish populations

## Florida Voted YES for Conservation

During the November elections, 75% of Florida voters approved passage of the Water and Land Legacy Constitutional Amendment 1. What does this mean for conservation? The Land Trust is working as a team with other Florida non-profits and members of the Alliance of Florida Land Trusts to ensure that an estimated \$600 million a year is allocated by the State Legislature, as intended by the Constitutional Amendment, for protecting water at its source. Some funding will be used for Everglades restoration, a critically important effort in our state. However, the majority of monies are expected to be set aside to fund land acquisition and restoration efforts for important natural areas in Florida, including the Indian River Lagoon. It is anticipated that some of these funds will likely be made available through grants to municipalities and non-profit organizations such as IRLT. The dedicated conservation funding stream, generated from real estate documentary stamp taxes, will commence in July 2015 and sunset in 2035.





## Engage Participate and Learn!

### Upcoming Land Trust Events – Available Free of Charge:

*There is no need to RSVP (except as noted)*

*Please check our website for weather cancellations prior to the event.*

*Questions? Call the office: 772-794-0701*

#### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY -**

**Tuesdays in February and March,  
meet at 8:30 am**

Join us every Tuesday for a couple of hours to help eliminate exotic ardisia (invasive ornamental shrub) at the Lagoon Greenway.

#### **BIRDING -**

**Bee Gum Point: February 14, 2015 7:00 am**

Amateurs and experienced birders are invited to grab a cup of coffee and head to the Land Trust's conservation land for a morning walk.

#### **CONSERVATION TOUR -**

**Bee Gum Point: February 18, 2015 9:00 am**

Situated on the Atlantic Flyway, this 111-acre property is part of an important block of conservation lands acquired by the Land Trust along the Indian River Lagoon in 2011.

#### **CONSERVATION TOUR -**

**Lagoon Greenway: February 20, 2015 9:00 am**

This exciting property boasts an ecologically diverse three-mile trail system for hiking, jogging or bike riding.

*Check our web-site [www.irlt.org](http://www.irlt.org) for more great events!*



*Ladies*  
OF THE LAGOON

## The Ladies of the Lagoon step up to meet the Challenge

The Ladies of the Lagoon, a group of like-minded members of the Land Trust are faced with the challenge of matching a generous \$25,000 gift given by Land Trust benefactor and Board member Georgia Welles in an effort to jump start electronic scientific studies of key fish species by Dr. Aaron Adams with the Florida Institute of Technology within the mosquito impoundment at Bee Gum Point.



Inaugural meeting of the Ladies of the Lagoon Spring of 2014

Last year the Ladies raised over \$10,000 toward the studies. Dubbing the program Adopt-a-Fish/ Tag-a-Tail, the women are hopeful they will be able to raise an additional 15,000 dollars over the next few months to meet Georgia Welles' challenge.



Checking traps for fish population study



Snook and Mullet



### The Lagoon Still Needs Our Help...

The Indian River Land Trust has protected 900 undeveloped acres, including eight miles of shoreline along the Indian River Lagoon. More work is needed to restore the fish and wildlife habitats of the Lagoon – the Cradle of the Ocean.

*Be a part of the Solution – Become a Member – donate today!  
Join us in our efforts to save the Indian River Lagoon.*

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For more information on the  
projects and events described in this  
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