

CONSERVATION UPDATE



Since 1987, Ducks Unlimited has completed projects in Florida conserving more than 29,000 acres across The Sunshine State. To date, DU and its partners have invested over \$6.2 million in Florida projects, with a goal of securing the future of waterfowl in Florida and throughout North America. DU is actively working to protect, restore and enhance wetland habitat in the state and on the breeding grounds most important to Florida's wintering waterfowl, such as the Prairie Pothole Region and the wild rice lake region of Minnesota.

FLORIDA QUICK FACTS

- **\$1,167,599 MILLION** raised in 2016
- **29,456 acres** conserved
- **883 Sponsors**
- **249 Major Sponsors**
- **14,769 total members**

79 Gun Giveaway - \$50 per Calendar

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MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

Florida's Campaign Committee achieved impressive results in 2016 by adding 9 new Life Sponsors, 8 major sponsor upgrades and 1 new Feather Society member. Clearly the people of Florida understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Vero Beach, Florida President's Council members Richard and Susan Muzzy's support for conservation through Ducks Unlimited goes back 40 years. Starting as a Bronze Sponsor and then as a Life Sponsor who attended several DU dinners over the years, Richard always understood and appreciated DU's mission. His support came full circle, however, when he met the late DU President Hazard Campbell.

"I met Hazard through our mutual friend and Wetlands America Trustee Deke Welles," he said. "Hazard was always gracious and friendly and after several sporting clay events and more DU dinners he asked me to join him on the Canadian Prairies for a sandhill crane hunt."

It was in Saskatchewan that Richard saw what DU does on the prairies. "It made a big impression," Richard said. "It was a great opportunity to see the many ways that the prairies can be protected and to experience first-hand the work that DU has done." Richard and Susan continue to support DU's work on the breeding grounds.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - LOWER SUWANNEE NWR ACCESS MAINTAINED

Sometimes a simple bridge project can have a big impact on management and enjoyment of waterfowl habitat. On Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, DU just completed such a project by stabilizing an eroding bridge abutment along the main road through the refuge. The Lower Suwannee NWR was established to protect the high water quality of the historic Suwannee River rather than for a specific species. The Suwannee feeds the estuarine waters of the Gulf of Mexico, habitat for the Gulf sturgeon and feeding grounds for resident and migratory shorebirds, wading birds and waterfowl. The 53,000-acre NWR flanks the last 20 miles of the Suwannee River and covers 30 miles of Gulf coastline. Foot trails, boardwalks, paddling trails, wildlife drives, archaeological sites, observation decks and fishing piers offer recreational opportunities.



VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

Volunteer fundraisers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Florida has some of the best. Florida boasts more than 14,700 members, including 1,061 energetic volunteers who hosted 87 events in 2016, raising nearly \$1.2 million to support DU's conservation mission.



The Key West chapter is one of those dedicated fundraising groups. Key West conjures images of beaches, coral reefs, pastel-hued houses and blue water, but not many people think of ducks. So chapter chairman Matthew Dowling is accustomed to the surprise when he tells people about the nation's southern-most and rapidly growing DU chapter.

What started less than 15 years ago as a 60-person dinner has morphed into one of the most popular events of the year with sold-out spaces and about 300 attendees. "It's unique to have a DU chapter in a community where there's no hunting," said Sr. Regional Director Brett Bainter. "It's proof in the pudding that people believe in our conservation efforts."

Matt says the local fishing guides understand what DU does to protect wetlands, and they understand that if they don't support wetland conservation, they won't have a livelihood in the fishing industry. It takes about three minutes with Matt to determine his boisterous nature is one of the reasons for this chapter's success. A Monroe County deputy sheriff, Matt is an excellent people-reader, and that skill has served him and the chapter well. The chapter focuses on making it a family-fun, Cadillac event and selling tables rather than individual tickets.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Having long been partners on a national scale, DU continues to strengthen our relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through project development locally on national wildlife refuges in Florida. Together, DU and the USFWS have partnered to restore and enhance more than 11,000 acres on refuges throughout the state, providing critical wetland habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and other wetland dependent wildlife. DU staff continues to build on this important partnership and is working with refuge partners to leverage funds for the delivery of quality habitat for the advancement of both of our missions.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



**SOUTHERN
REGION**

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