



July-December 2025 CREW News





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Executive Director Update

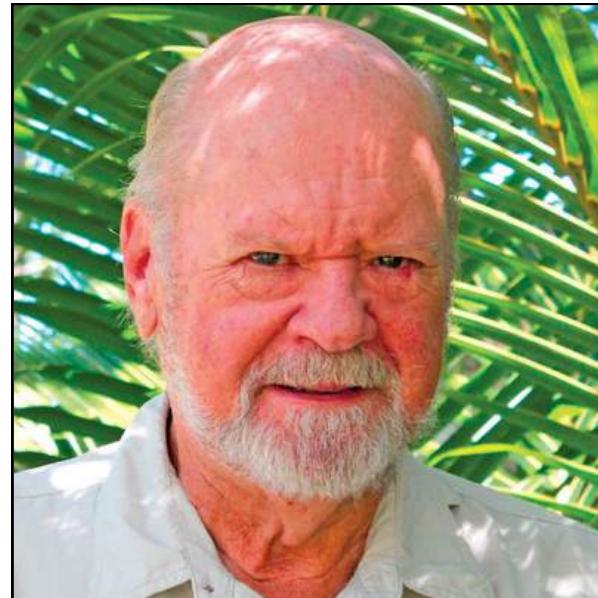
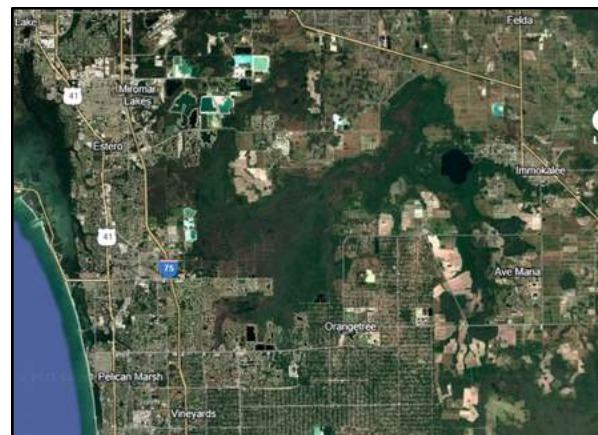
Greetings, Friends of CREW!

As we transition into 2026, we can all look back with pride at what we – staff, volunteers & members – were collectively able to accomplish in 2025.

Advancing CREW Trust's mission to protect and steward the water resources of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) takes many forms, including educational programming, community engagement, and promotion of compatible, sustainable public use. It's all designed to cultivate generations of stakeholders who understand CREW's importance and are both equipped and inspired to care for these vital lands now and in the years ahead.

As many of you know by now, we recently lost a giant in conservation, Ed Carlson, who passed away in mid-December. Although he is perhaps best known for his contributions at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary over a career that lasted more than a half century, he was also instrumental in the launch of the CREW Project in 1986 and the founding of CREW Trust just a few years later. In fact, Ed served on the CREW Trust board from 1989 until 2019, including 13 years on our Executive Committee and five years as Board Chairman (2005-2010).

As a young man, Ed Carlson helped build the boardwalk at the Sanctuary that tens of thousands of adults and children enjoy each year as they learn about the value of our local ecosystems and natural communities. He knew perhaps better than anyone that the work we accomplish today will reverberate for generations to come. As the ancient Greek proverb reminds us: *"A society grows great when old men plant trees under whose shade they know they shall never sit."*



Ed Carlson (1950-2025)

Executive Director Update, Cont'd

I can't stress enough how vital our members are to CREW Trust's mission. Your generous financial contributions, support for our programs, and encouragement of our staff and volunteers make everything we do possible. You are indeed planting trees under which future generations will sit.

In the pages that follow, Robin, Piper and Trish will detail some of the amazing work staff and volunteers have accomplished over the last six months, but I first wanted to thank those who participated in our recent 2026-2027 CREW Trails Sponsorship Campaign. We had 17 returning and 6 new corporate sponsors, as well as 23 individual/family sponsors step up for this important fundraiser. This campaign has proven to be among our most important and rewarding fundraisers, not simply because it generates revenue for trail maintenance, but also because the CREW Trail Sponsor signs at all CREW trailheads offer tangible reminders bearing witness to your commitment to the preservation and stewardship of CREW. Check out the sign photos on the next page. If you're interested in becoming a sponsor for the 2026-2027 Trail Sponsorship Campaign, please refer to the sign-up form later in this issue. **Registration is now open!**

I also want to give a shout out to the Severus Foundation, the Collier Community Foundation, Lee County Electric Cooperative and the Bergauer Family for recent grants to support our research, trail maintenance and environmental education activities. While we largely depend on member support to fund these efforts, occasional grants from agencies and individuals like these help make up funding shortfalls, ensuring we can continue to provide vital services throughout the year.

Thank you again for all your support and continued commitment to the preservation and stewardship of CREW. On behalf of the entire staff, we look forward to seeing you out on the trails!



2026-2027 CREW Trails Sponsorship Opportunities

- \$5,000** Includes large logo on six 2026-2027 trailhead sponsor signs, an exclusive guided hike for your team, and acknowledgments on CREW Trust's website, newsletter, social media posts and press release.
- \$2,500** Includes medium logo on six 2026-2027 trailhead sponsor signs and acknowledgments on CREW Trust's website, newsletter, social media posts, and press release.
- \$1,500** Includes small logo on six 2026-2027 trailhead sponsor signs and acknowledgments on CREW Trust's website, newsletter, and social media posts.
- \$1,000** Includes name on six 2026-2027 trailhead sponsor signs and acknowledgments on CREW Trust's website, newsletter, and social media posts.
- \$500** Includes acknowledgments on CREW Trust's website, newsletter and social media posts.
- \$250** **Individual & Family Sponsor:** Includes name on six 2026-2027 trailhead sponsor signs, and acknowledgements on CREW Trust's website, newsletter and social media posts.

SPONSOR NAME AS IT SHOULD BE PRINTED:

CONTACT NAME:

PHONE:

EMAIL:

ADDRESS:



Passarella & Associates, Inc.
2023-2024 Trail Sponsor

Make checks payable to CREW Land & Water Trust

23998 Corkscrew Road, Estero, FL 33928

or contact rclucius@crewtrust.org

Please email your high-resolution color logo to CREWTrust@CREWTrust.org

You may also contribute online at

www.crewtrust.org/donate

Select "sponsorship" under donation type!

Trail Operations

Trails Are Dry and Ready to Enjoy

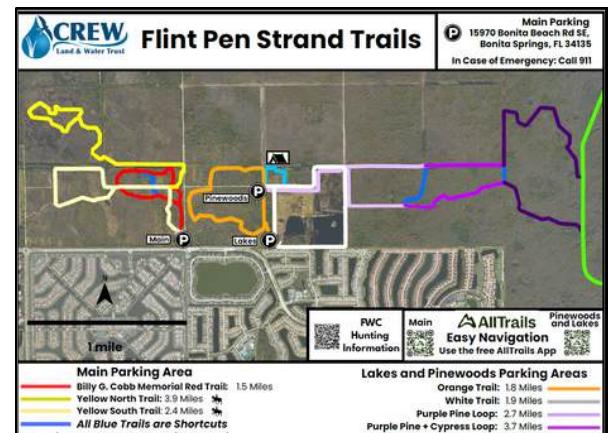
The Trail Work Tuesday team has been hard at work making their way around CREW, visiting each trail to prepare for the transition to the dry season! The trails have been mowed, lopped, re-marked, and readied for your enjoyment. Trail conditions are updated monthly on our website, FaceBook, Instagram, and on extension 0 when you call the CREW Trust office number (239-637-2253).



New Trail Maps Published

Be sure to check out the new trail maps published this fall! Each trail system map features a beautiful trail photo on the front of the brochure. The maps have been updated with a new satellite base layer, standardized formatting and symbols, QR codes for AllTrails maps and hunting information, as well as more accurate trail length information. The back of each map has been redesigned with information about the trails, the CREW watershed, CREW Trust, events and programs, and how to get involved. You can also download new maps at

www.crewtrust.org



Summer Wet Walks Made a Big Splash

During the recent wet season, CREW Trust offered wet walks on the CREW Trails, offering guests an opportunity to get their feet wet, experience the beauty of the trails in summer, and learn about the watershed and its flora and fauna - with opportunities for dip netting and soil sampling along the way. At CREW Cypress Dome Trails, participants enjoyed a full tour of representative CREW ecosystems, exploring a marsh, cypress dome, and popash slough. We also discussed pine uplands around us, as well as the oak hammocks and ecotone transition zones in between. At CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails, we hiked the first loop of the purple trail, visiting the marsh, the Kehl Canal, and exploring hydric pine flatwoods spotted with cypress and various carnivorous plants.



Trail Operations, Cont'd

Volunteer Program Stats

From July to December 2025, CREW Trust volunteers logged over 2,500 volunteer hours! This includes time spent maintaining trails, guiding hikes, conducting wildlife surveys, assisting with research, helping with education programs, and so much more!

New Volunteering Opportunity: Willow Wednesday

Although it is a native species, Carolina willow (*Salix caroliniana*) can become a “nuisance species” when it forms dense stands in marshes. When this happens, it can reduce biodiversity and disrupt water flow and hydroperiods. Interested in helping us remove nuisance willow from our small marshes at the CREW Cypress Dome Trails and CREW Marsh Trails this dry season? We are looking for volunteers to assist every third Wednesday: Sign up on Track It Forward or contact **Robin** at robin@crewtrust.org.

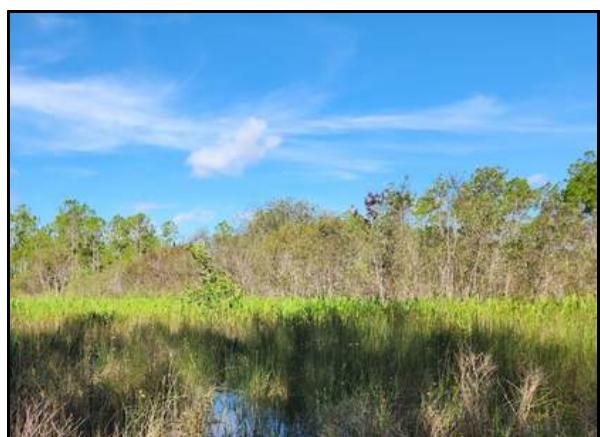
New Picnic area at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

The Trail Work Tuesday team created a new picnic area this summer at the pond off Harrell Road, seen on your left as you drive towards the Pinewoods Parking Area. The area around this beautiful pond has been cleaned up and a picnic table installed. This is a great spot to have lunch with friends or family, read a book, hydrate while hiking, watch the birds, and simply sit and enjoy nature.

Upcoming CREW Herpetofauna (Reptiles and Amphibians) Study

The Trail Work Tuesday team helped Florida Gulf Coast University researchers install study plots for a 2026 herp study at CREW. This study will assess herp biodiversity at nine sites across CREW Cypress Domes and CREW Marsh Trails. This study duplicates research done 15 and 30 years ago and aims to learn about recent changes in herp biodiversity at CREW.

Research sites will be surveyed at set intervals throughout 2026. If you're interested in volunteering with the study team, please contact **Robin** at CREWtrust.org,



Education Programming

Walk Through A Watershed

Our education team recently completed another season of *Walk Through a Watershed* in support of Collier County Public Schools. Almost 400 third grade students came out to CREW Marsh Trails during October and November to participate in this program. The students began the day learning the difference between vertebrates and invertebrates; next, they embarked on a hike discovering flowering and non-flowering plants. They ended the trip learning about water quality by dip netting near Suzanne's pavilion. We are excited to begin preparing for the second grade field trips in the coming weeks!

High School Programs

Along with all our elementary school field trips, we also hosted several high school students this fall. Lee County's STEM @ Work program visited CREW Cypress Dome Trails for a program focused on habitat differences in our watershed. Four biology classes from Aubrey Rogers High School visited CREW Cypress Dome Trails to learn what it takes to be an Ecologist: investigating soil types, discovering microhabitats, and learning vegetation monitoring skills.

Adult Programs

We have officially started another season of adult programming with a diverse range of topics, including *Bug Watch* - an interactive insect identification hike led by entomologist Constance Darrisaw, and *The Secret Lives of Panthers and Bobcats* - a hike led by Mark Lotz, a panther biologist with FWC. Coming up in the spring we will offer *Edible and Medicinal Plants*, which completely sold out last year, and *Invasive Plants of Southwest Florida*, led by Rick Bauer the CREW Science Supervisor for the South Florida Water Management District, as well as multiple programs for kids including *Life in a Log*, and *Herpetology for Kids*. As always, we will also be offering our regular guided hikes and monthly guided birding walks. Check out the full schedule of programs at crewtrust.eventbrite.com.



Education Programming, Cont'd

University Programs

The summer and fall semesters at FGCU have come and gone! Colloquium, a class focused on sustainability and the challenges of integrating people, profit, and the planet in sustainable development, continues to visit CREW Marsh Trails and CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails as part of their field trip rotation. On these field trips, students hike the trails and discuss how water travels through our watershed and the role CREW plays in enhancing groundwater supply, water quality and stormwater control. We also welcomed two Environmental Geology classes out to the trails this fall to learn about soil composition, aquifers, and groundwater flow. We are looking forward to welcoming FGCU students back to the trails during the upcoming semester!



Community Science

An important part of environmental education is data collection and monitoring the state of CREW's ecosystems. This fall, we held our bi-annual *Butterfly Count* with Connie Nagele at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails. We recorded 294 butterflies representing 22 different species. The spring *Butterfly Count* is open for registration on Eventbrite now! Piper also completed the 2025 frog and toad surveys for FWC - this survey ran from June - September. Amphibians are an indicator species, meaning their presence and/or absence can tell us a lot about the health of an ecosystem; so, studying these species at CREW is crucial.



In-Town Lectures

Our summer in-town lecture series was a huge success! We had some amazing topics: *Eat the Weeds in your Backyard*, *Exploring CREW's Fern Diversity*, *Understanding Mosquitoes in our Ecosystem*, *Frogs: Canaries in our Wetlands*, *The Splendid and the Vile (Parasites)*, and *From Aquifer to Tap*, all presented by experts in each field and hosted at venues throughout Lee and Collier Counties. We are already looking forward to planning the Summer 2026 In-Town Lecture Series - reach out if you have any topic suggestions!



Youth Education Programs - Fall 2025



Adult Education Programs - Fall 2025



Engagement & Outreach

Speaking and Tabling in Southwest Florida

It's been a busy summer and fall for CREW Trust! We tabled at Riptide Brewing Company, spoke to the Bonita Springs Downtown Alliance and Bonita Springs Historical Society, the Big Cypress Basin Board, the Greenscape Alliance, multiple HOAs and communities, and so much more! Interested in hosting a CREW Trust presentation? E-mail Bob at r.lucius@crewtrust.org to request CREW Trust to speak or table at your event or community!



Cold Ones for CREW Trust!

This October, CREW Trust launched its very first beer in collaboration with Riptide Brewing Company in Bonita Springs. The CREW Aquifer Ale is a tribute to aquifers, the underground water reservoirs that supply the majority of our region's drinking water. The CREW lands are one of the most important areas for aquifer recharge in Southwest Florida, and \$1 from each pour goes back to CREW Trust. To date, over \$300 has been raised! The CREW Aquifer Ale is available on tap and in cans at Riptide Brewing Company!



Fall 2025 Communications Intern: Claire Turner

Claire Turner served as our Fall 2025 Communications Intern. Claire is a senior at Florida Gulf Coast University majoring in Art with a minor in Environmental Education, and she put her artistic talents to work at CREW this fall! Claire created original watercolors of iconic scenes from each of the four CREW trail systems, documenting her painting journey along the way! This watercolor series was our most popular social media series of the fall!



There's Never Been a Better Time to Become a Member!

It's been a great start to our 2025-26 Members-Only program season! CREW Trust Members allow us to deliver youth education programs free of charge. As a thank you, we host free monthly members-only programs! So far, we've held a meet-up social, a morning hike, a night hike, and a Mindfulness Hike led by Piper! **Register for future members-only programs at crewtrust.eventbrite.com**



Engagement & Outreach, Cont'd

Comments from the Community!

Check out what visitors and program participants are saying about CREW:

Layla C: "Awesome events scheduled this season!! Thank you for encouraging our community to appreciate and protect what makes our area such a uniquely special place in the world."

Amanda A: "Such a joy to be surrounded by so many beautiful butterflies and such lovely people!"

Shaleza: "Loved the soil sample discussions! Very informative and so much fun!"

Craig: "So many great Trails here... I highly suggest you spend some time there and really explore!"

Jeremy: "The trails are well marked, and there is a lot to see... We're fortunate to have these trails so close to us, yet it seems like miles away when you're out on the trails. I highly recommend getting out and joining some of the CREW activities."

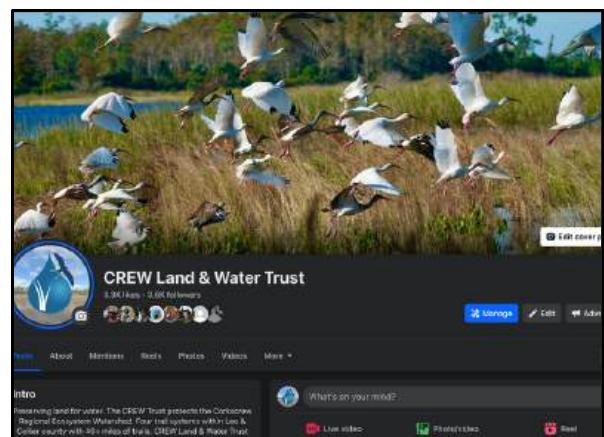
CREW Trust's Social Media is Soaring!

From upcoming program reminders to fun frog facts to beauty shots of the trails, the CREW Trust social media is your place to go! Find us on **Facebook** and **LinkedIn** at CREW Land & Water Trust and on **Instagram** at [crewtrust](#).

Bonus: Are you a CREW enthusiast looking to share your experiences or photos from CREW with the world? Tag us in your posts of the CREW trails for the chance to be featured on our page!

Are You Receiving the CREW Mini and Middy?

Last summer, CREW Trust launched our monthly digital newsletter, the CREW News Monthly Mini, and an accompanying mid-month program reminder, which we dubbed the 'Middy!' The Mini includes program reminders, trail conditions, featured stories, photos from the trails, and volunteering opportunities, while the Middy only provides mid-month program reminders. If you haven't been receiving these email newsletters, please email r.lucius@crewtrust.org.



Closure at CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail

Temporary Closure at CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail

As you may have heard, the boardwalk and parking lot at CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail has been closed since December 12th. We had hoped these facilities would remain open until February, when the rebuild of the boardwalk and expansion of the parking lot are scheduled to begin; however, recent inspections indicated several potential safety concerns. Consequently, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) directed the immediate closure of the boardwalk. It and the parking will remain closed throughout the duration of construction to ensure public safety and allow for the installation of additional visitor amenities when the site reopens.

The infrastructure improvements at CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail are planned to begin in early February with completion projected to occur by Fall 2026. These include a complete rebuild of the 1400' boardwalk, which will improve long-term durability, safety, and environmental protection, ensuring CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail can be enjoyed by future generations. The parking lot will also be expanded to include several additional spaces. Additionally, pre-cast CTX concrete vault toilets will also be installed at the parking area. These improvements, budgeted at more than \$1.5 million, reflect the SFWMD's continued commitment to protecting South Florida's natural resources while enhancing compatible public access and recreation. The SFWMD has expressed appreciation for the public's patience and cooperation as these exciting improvements are made.

We know the boardwalk closure during season will come as a disappointment to those who love CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail as much as we do, but the safety of visitors is paramount. The good news is that the tram trail itself remains open and can be accessed via the Purple Trail at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails, located off Bonita Beach Road. This is also a great time to explore CREW's other three trail systems!

For updates on project progress and recreational opportunities, please visit
[https://www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/recreation.](https://www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/recreation)



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Volunteer with CREW Trust

Trail Maintenance • Education & Outreach • Administrative Support



Email robin@crewtrust.org
to get started today!



Specialty Program Schedule

October 2025 - April 2026

Bug Watch

Fri Oct 3 - 7:30-9:30 PM - CREW Marsh Trails

Fall Blooms at Sunset

Sat Oct 25 - 5-7 PM - CREW Cypress Dome Trails

The Secret Lives of Panthers and Bobcats

Sat Nov 8 - 9-11 AM - CREW Marsh Trails

Watershed Water Quality

Sat Dec 5 - 9-11 AM - CREW Marsh Trails

Geocaching at CREW Flint Pen Strand

Sun Dec 14 - 9-12 PM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

The Wonderful World of Frogs:

Strolling Science for Kids

Sun Jan 11 - 9-11 AM - CREW Cypress Dome Trails

Edible and Medicinal Plants

Sun Jan 18 - 9-11 AM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Invasive Plants of Southwest Florida

Sat Feb 7 - 9-11 AM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Life in a Log: Strolling Science for Kids

Fri Feb 20 - 9-11 AM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Herpetology for Kids

Sat Mar 7 - 9-11 AM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Exploring Reptile and Amphibian Diversity at CREW

Sat Mar 21 - 9-11 AM - CREW Marsh Trails

Nest Check: Strolling Science

Sat Apr 11 - 8-11 AM - CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Spring Blooms at Sunset

Sat Apr 18 - 6-8 PM - CREW Marsh Trails



To register, visit at
crewtrust.eventbrite.com





Members-Only Programs

Oct 10

Members Social

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Riptide Brewing Company

Nov 21

Morning Coffee, Roll & Stroll

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail

Dec 12

Night Hike

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

CREW Marsh Trails

Jan 9

Mindfulness Hike

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

CREW Marsh Trails

Jan 22

Painting in Nature

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Feb 20

Members Social

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Riptide Brewing Company

Mar 25

Bug Watch

7:45 PM - 9:45 PM

CREW Marsh Trails

Apr 24

Members Social Roll & Stroll

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail

EVENT
CANCELLED

Always free,
only for the
CREW!



Not a
member?
Join today at
crewtrust.org

To register, visit
crewtrust.eventbrite.org



Thank You to Sponsors of CREW Trust's 15th Annual Stanley Hole Golf Tournament

Champion Sponsors

 **CAMERATTA COMPANIES**

 **taylor morrison.**
HOMES INSPIRED BY YOU

NEAL COMMUNITIES
Where You Live Matters

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Oak Hole Sponsors



You can also join or renew online by visiting
www.crewtrust.org and navigating to the



BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Your Membership Includes

- Discounted tickets to events & programs
- Free Admission to Members-Only events
- Exclusive subscription to CREW News
- Satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to the CREW Trust mission!

Join the CREW Trust NOW & Make A Difference Today!

CREWTrust.org



CREW Trust is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization that helps to protect our 60,000-acre Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed. We rely on memberships and donations from generous people like you to fund our programs.



Membership Application

Join/renew at CREWtrust.org

Name _____

Company/Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City, ST, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

How did you hear about CREW?

I am a NEW or RENEWING member (Circle one)

(We do NOT share member information, including email, with other organizations.)

<input type="radio"/> Preserver (\$5000 +)	<input type="radio"/> Cypress (\$250)
<input type="radio"/> Panther (\$3500)	<input type="radio"/> Ghost Orchid (\$100)
<input type="radio"/> Woodstork (\$2000)	<input type="radio"/> Bobcat (\$50)
<input type="radio"/> Southern Bald Eagle (\$1000)	<input type="radio"/> Family (\$35)
<input type="radio"/> Swallow-Tailed Kite (\$500)	<input type="radio"/> Individual (\$25)

Thank you!

Make checks payable to CREW Land & Water Trust

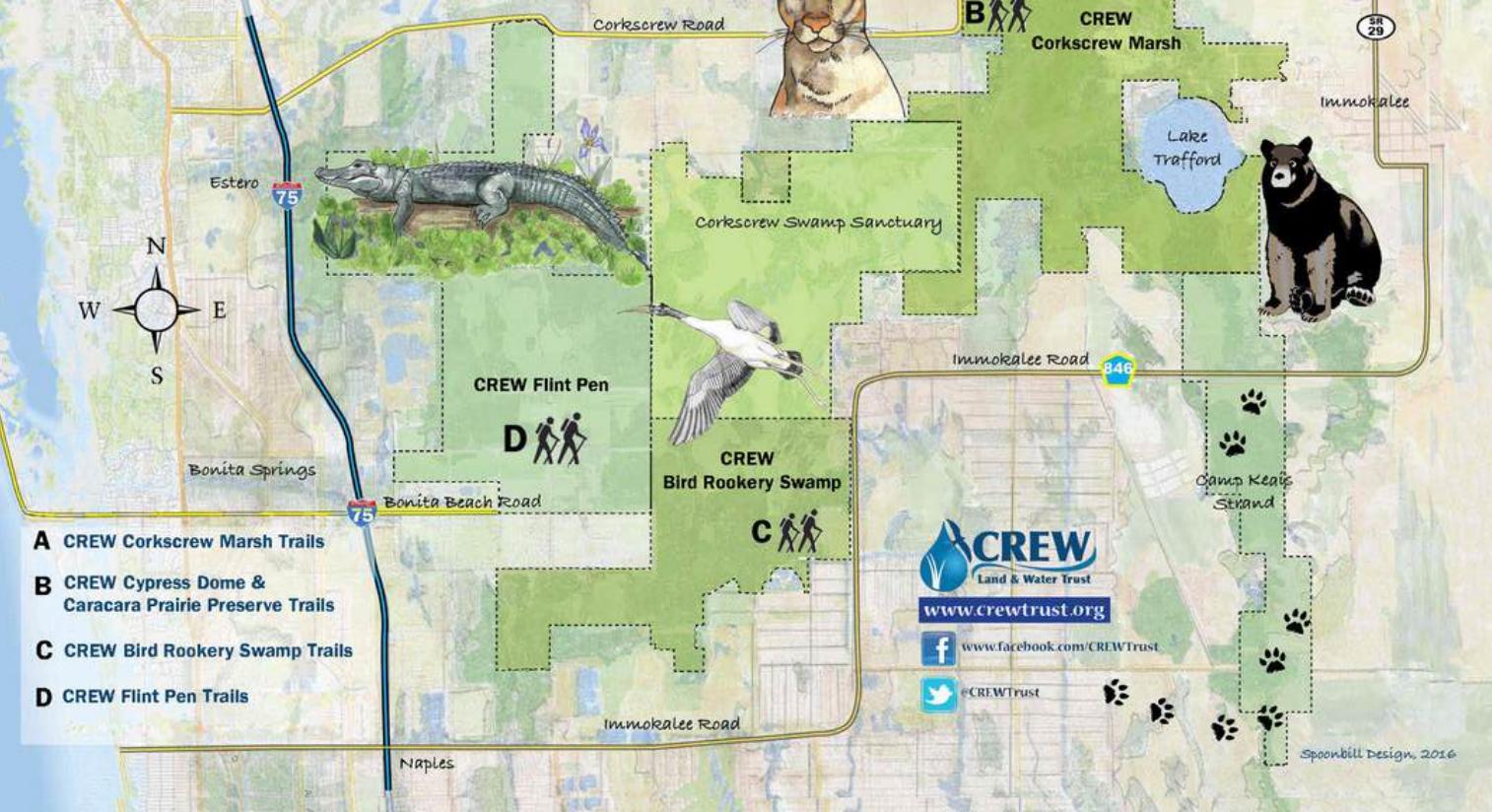
23998 Corkscrew Road, Estero, FL 33928

(239) 657-2253

CREWTrust.org

CREW Trails

(Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed)



CREW Land & Water Trust



Instagram: @crewtrust



CREW Land & Water Trust



crewtrust.eventbrite.com

NEED TO REACH US?

Main Office Phone: 239-637-2253

Extension 0: Trail Conditions

Extension 1: Executive Director

Extension 2: Education Coordinator

Extension 3: Trail Operations Coordinator

Extension 4: Engagement Coordinator

or E-mail us at CREWTrust@CREWTrust.ORG