



January-March 2026 CREW News





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Executive Director Update

Greetings, Friends of CREW!

The CREW Trust staff has a weekly meeting every Monday morning. It's an opportunity for the four of us to share what we've got coming up in the next few weeks and for me to ensure everybody has the resources they need to be successful. Usually, I'm gobsmacked by the sheer amount and variety of activities Piper, Robin & Trish are carrying out, especially during season. I frequently must remind them to pace themselves as all too frequently, they're not just fully engaged throughout the week, but on weekends as well. Unlike many other organizations that have dedicated, specialized staff, each of CREW Trust's staff members must be a *Jack-of-all-Trades*; however, the result is that penny-for-penny, we are able to deliver more value for every dollar contributed by members, donors and sponsors than organizations two or three times our size. Fortunately, we also have fantastic volunteers who assist with trail maintenance and community engagement, support our educational programs, lead guided walks, and serve on our board. CREW Trust is all about teamwork and our team includes those volunteers, as well as others who generously support our work because they believe in our mission.

I also want to recognize our Spring Environmental Education Intern, Vania Azevedo. Vania is currently a senior at Florida Gulf Coast University majoring in Integrated Studies. In the future, she hopes to work in environmental education or a related profession so she can share her love for the natural world and inspire others to become environmental stewards.

As the Environmental Education Intern, Vania has been assisting with our field trips and programs, and she even helped develop our table presentation for the Naples's Flower Show & Garden Market organized by the Naples Garden Club. With her help, CREW Trust's table display won a 2nd Place prize!



Vania Azevedo

Executive Director Update, Cont'd

In the pages that follow, we'll detail some of the programs and activities the staff has been working on over the last three months, but before I hand you off to them, I'd be remiss if I didn't encourage you to consider becoming a 2026-2027 CREW Trails Sponsor.

Our trail sponsorship campaign is CREW Trust's most important and rewarding fundraisers of the year, not simply because it helps us generate revenue for maintaining and improving CREW's nearly 45 miles of mixed-use trails, but also because it offers a great way for supporters like you to demonstrate your commitment to the preservation and stewardship of CREW. When you become a sponsor, your name (or business logo) will be prominently displayed on large signs installed at six different trailheads across CREW's four trail systems. The 100,000+ visitors who pass them each year will know that you're committed to the protection and stewardship of those places where wild things still roam, waters run clean, and people find peace in nature. If you're interested in becoming a sponsor for the 2026-2027 Trail Sponsorship Campaign, please refer to the sign-up form on the next page, visit www.crewtrust.org or write to me at rlucius@crewtrust.org.

I also want to express our gratitude to the **Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation** and the **Naples Garden Club** for recent grants they awarded to CREW Trust for our trail maintenance and environmental education programs. As a small staff, we don't have the capacity to apply for a lot of grants; so, when an organization reaches out to us with an offer of assistance because they believe in our mission and recognize our record of accomplishment, it truly makes all the difference. Thanks to these grants, we'll be able to acquire an additional Utility Vehicle for trail maintenance and will have the resources to support the development of self-guided tours of the CREW trails in multiple languages.

Thank you again for all your support. 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 rlucius@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

New Orange Trail Open at CREW Marsh Trails

The new Orange Trail runs alongside a canal and features pine flatwoods, oak and palm hammocks. It also visits the only cypress-lined marsh at CREW Marsh Trails. The cypress stand has impressive bromeliads and abundant large and twisted cypress knees. This trail is a favorite hangout for swallow-tailed kites, gopher tortoises, and other wildlife.

Sign up for our Members Only hike on Friday, April 24.

Accessing Bird Rookery Swamp via Flint Pen

Even though the CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail entrance on Shady Hollow Road is temporarily closed, the remainder of the loop trail can be accessed via the Purple Trail at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails off Bonita Beach Road.

Park your car at the Pinewoods Parking Area, 16470 Harrell Ave, and hike the Purple Trail. The Purple Trail is a 5.9 mile loop, so it is approximately 3 miles to reach the intersection with the CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail, which is approximately 7.75 miles around, making for a 13.75 mile round trip.

New Signs Help You Navigate CREW

The Trail Work Tuesday team has installed new signs at all of the CREW trail systems to help visitors navigate tricky trail intersections and find the campsites. Keep an eye out for the new white and blue signs.

Volunteer Program Stats

From January to March 2026, CREW Trust volunteers logged over 1,500 volunteer hours! This includes over 800 hours maintaining trails, over 500 hours leading programs, and time spent conducting wildlife surveys, helping with education programs, and so much more.

Volunteers have participated in 12 Trail Work Tuesdays, 17 Guided Hikes and other events, installed 46 signs and one bench, and removed 1/3 mile of barbed wire fencing.



Trail Operations, Cont'd

New Chronolog Signs Make It Even Easier To Monitor Our Ecosystems

There are now Chronolog stations at every trail system in CREW! You can participate in this community science project by simply taking a photo with your phone. Line up your phone on the stand, take a photo, send it in by scanning the QR code on the sign. Your photo will be added to the time-lapse video from that location. We've added new instructional signs to help you participate!



Purple Martins nest at CREW for the second year!

Visit the Lakes Parking Area at CREW Flint Pen Strand for a special treat; Purple martins are nesting in the gourd tower at the lakes! These small iridescent birds migrate here in January to nest in human-provided nesting towers.



Want a peek inside? Join our **April 11th Nest Check Strolling Science Seminar** with FGCU Ornithology professor Dr. Oscar Johnson to meet our purple martin eggs and chicks!

Progress on Native Orchid Restoration at CREW

380 native orchids spanning 13 species were planted at CREW in July of 2025. This collaborative restoration effort was led by Trail Operations Coordinator Robin Serne, with guidance from Rich Ackerman from Broward Native Orchids, and help from conservationists from 10 local organizations.



Despite a dry and cold winter and a slightly drier than normal wet season last year, the orchids are doing well. In recent surveys, about 80% have been found thriving.

CREW Herpetofauna (Reptiles and Amphibians) Study

The 2026 herp study at CREW is underway. This study will inform us about recent changes in herp biodiversity at CREW compared to 15 and 30 years ago.



The research team has completed one survey period, which occurred during the cold snap (not a good time for catching herps), but they still caught 5 brown anoles, 2 greenhouse frogs, 1 ribbon snake, 1 three-striped mud turtle, and 3 small mammals. All were safely released back to the wild.

Education Programming

SoilROCKS!

Our education team is nearing the end of the spring field trip season. By the end of March, almost 500 second-grade students will have participated in this program and experienced CREW Cypress Dome Trails. The students begin the day exploring three different habitats in southwest Florida: pine flatwoods, seasonal marshes, and cypress domes. At each habitat, they learn about soil type, soil moisture, plant diversity, and native wildlife. Next, students examine different animal skulls and learn about adaptations wildlife develop to survive. To finish the day, they embark on a scavenger hunt, looking for signs of wildlife and pollinators. Eight different schools joined us this year and Piper is already looking forward to working with teachers to plan for the upcoming 2026/2027 school year!

Adult Programs

As another season comes to an end, we're also thrilled about the wide array of topics and experts we showcased in this year's seasonal program schedule. This spring we hosted *Edible & Medicinal Plants* led by Amanda Adams, *Invasive Plants of Southwest Florida* led by Rick Bauer, and *Exploring Reptile and Amphibian Diversity* led by John Cassani. This April, we will wrap up the season with *Nest Check* led by Dr. Oscar Johnson, *Spring Blooms at Sunset* led by Julie Motkowicz, *Eat the Weeds in Your Backyard* with Amanda Adams, and a *Sunset Mindfulness Hike* led by our own Piper Jones. As always, we also had all our regularly scheduled guided hikes and birding walks. There are still a few spots left for the last birding hike of the season at CREW Flint Pen Strand trails on April 20, which will be focused on spring migration. A huge thank you to Barbara Centola and Dick Brewer for leading the birding hikes this season!

Be sure to check out the full schedule of programs at crewtrust.eventbrite.com.



Education Programming, Cont'd

In-Town Lectures

Our summer in-town lecture series gets bigger and better each year! We are already planning the Summer 2026 In-Town Lecture Series and should be ready to announce the dates & locations very soon. This summer, we expect to host lectures about *Edible & Medicinal Plants of CREW*, *Prescribed Fire for Land Management*, *Alligator Ecology*, *Watershed Ecology & Restoration*, *Mycology*, and *CREW History*, as well as a panel discussion about *Mental Health & Nature*, and a hands-on class on *Owl Pellet Dissection*.

Be sure to check out our Facebook & Instagram pages, as well as [crewtrust.eventbrite.com](https://www.crewtrust.eventbrite.com) to learn when these lectures will be open for registration.

University Programs

The spring 2026 semester at FGCU brought a diverse range of classes out to the trails! Colloquium, a class focused on sustainability and the importance of integrating people, profit, and the planet to achieve 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 hosted four FGCU Environmental Geology classes on the trails this spring to learn about soil composition, aquifers, and groundwater flow. In March, Piper got to welcome an outdoor education class all the way from Bowling Green State University in Ohio on a full moon hike and was reunited with Dr. Hensley, one of her Environmental Education professors from her undergraduate days! Piper is looking forward to coordinating and welcoming all the Summer and Fall 2026 semester FGCU students!



Youth Education Programs - Spring 2026



Adult Education Programs - Spring 2026



Engagement & Outreach

Out and About in SWFL

It's been another busy season for tabling! Since the new year began, CREW Trust has been spreading the word about CREW to over 800 people at 10 local events and festivals, including the Burrowing Owl Festival, Village Walk's Butterfly Festival, Temple Shalom, STEM Day at JetBlue Park and more! **Interested in CREW Trust tabling or speaking at your event? E-mail ee@crewtrust.org today!**

CREW Trust Takes Second at the 2026 Flower Show

The CREW Trust team was delighted to be awarded second place in the Education Display category at the 2026 Naples Flower Show & Garden Market at the Naples Botanical Garden! Our display featured some of CREW's most iconic wildflowers, their pollinators, and where to find them at CREW! Thank you to the Naples Garden Club for the invitation and award! **For more information, visit www.naplesgarden.org**

CREW Trust Orchestrates 2026 Environment Day

The 2026 Environment Day for Leadership Collier was a great success, and CREW Trust was at the heart of the day's operations. CREW Trust's executive director, Bob Lucius, graduated from the program in 2025 and returned to plan the 2026 Environment Day. This year's program included 12 subject matter experts and opportunities to learn about 24 local conservation organizations. Participants learned about the most pressing environmental issues SWFL faces and how local environmental organizations are working on solutions.

Another Great Season of Members Programs

From watching bugs on the trail to painting the lake at sunset, the 2025-26 season has been another great one for our Members-Only programs! Thank you to the 100+ CREW Trust Members who attended these complimentary programs so far this season! Join us for our last Members program of season: a hike along the new Orange Trail at CREW Marsh Trails on Friday, April 24th! **Register at crewtrust.eventbrite.com**



Engagement & Outreach, Cont'd

Bringing New Folks to CREW

There's been a lot of new faces at CREW this season! Since 2026 began, CREW Trust has led 180+ visitors from local organizations on guided walks along the trails, including the Florida Master Naturalist Program, Alligator Amblers, Naples Veteran Center, Naples Garden Club, The Alliance for Florida National Parks and more! **Interested in a free group tour of the CREW trails? Email education@crewtrust.org**



CREW's Fire Program Getting a Refresh

While the drought brought burn season to an early end, the South Florida Water Management District is already updating CREW's fire lines for next year. Fire needs three things to burn: heat, oxygen, and fuel (vegetation). To control where fires can burn, land managers create breaks in the vegetation, known as "fire lines", that act like cages to help contain flames. Prescribed fire is a key management practice at CREW and these updates will enable more efficient burns!



Comments from the Community

Karen K: "Just hiked the red trail last week. We came up looking for swallowtail kites and were not disappointed."

Joshua F: "Best place in SWFL."

Jessica D: "One of our regular hikes, but we often add parts from the other connected trails. I love the wildflowers along it [Green Trail at CREW Marsh Trails]."

Brian B: "Recently, we participated in one of CREW's guided "Wet Walks." My kids are already asking when we can do it again!!"



Stay Connected with CREW

It's never been easier to stay up-to-date and get involved with all things CREW Trust!

Enjoy newsletters? Email rlucius@crewtrust.org to join the 700+ friends of CREW receiving our two monthly e-newsletters!

Looking for weekly updates? Follow us on Instagram (@crewtrust), Facebook (CREW Land & Water Trust), and LinkedIn (CREW Land & Water Trust)

Interested in volunteering? Email robin@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 have been closed since December 12th.

Construction on the new boardwalk and extension of the parking lot began in March with completion projected to occur by Fall 2026. Ongoing work includes 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 while minimizing the impact on wildlife and water.

The parking lot is also being expanded to provide several additional spaces. Additionally, pre-cast CTX concrete vault toilets have been installed at the parking area to replace the porta-johns.

We know the boardwalk closure during season has been a disappointment to those who love CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail as much as we do, but we hope you appreciate this investment in the future of this beloved trail. In the meantime, the loop part of the tram trail remains open and can be accessed via the Purple Trail at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails, located off Bonita Beach Road. This is a great time to explore CREW's other three trail systems!



Deconstruction of the old boardwalk is already underway!

**CREW Bird Rookery Swamp Trail
Parking Lot & Boardwalk **CLOSED**
Through Late 2026**

CREW Trails
Corkscrew Regional (Immokalee) Watershed

Please visit another CREW trail system during this time

CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails
15970 Bonita Beach Road SE, Bonita Springs, FL 34135

CREW Cypress Dome Trails
3980 Corkscrew Road, Immokalee, FL 34142

CREW Marsh Trails
4600 Corkscrew Road, Immokalee, FL 34142

The logo for CREW (Corkscrew Regional Watershed) featuring a stylized water drop and the text "CREW Lead & Water Good".

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Volunteer with CREW Trust

Trail Maintenance • Education & Outreach • Administrative Support



“Come join the CREW!”



Email robin@crewtrust.org
to get started today!



Volunteer First Aid Training

Volunteer First Aid Training at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails

Keeping our volunteers and staff safe in the field is a top priority for CREW Trust. To ensure they know what to do in case of an emergency or health crisis, we asked first responders from the Greater Naples Fire Rescue District to provide field CPR and trail safety training for our CREW Trust volunteers earlier in the season.

This training focused on recognizing common signs of distress and other medical emergencies. They also learned to providing basic first aid on the trail. This training included practicing both skill sets during scenarios with “injured” trail-goers in need of assistance.

Thanks to this training, our CREW Trust team is better equipped to respond quickly and appropriately to field medical emergencies as they await professional first responders.



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

Did You Know?

Purple Martin Nesting Tower

Purple martins (*Progne subis*) are the largest swallows in North America, and each spring they migrate south to breed. Before an entire colony arrives, “scouts” venture forth to identify a suitable habitat. You may have noticed such activity around the Purple Martin Tower located on the western side of the lakes at CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails.

The CREW FPS Purple Martin Tower is an ongoing collaboration between CREW Trust and the FGCU Ornithology Club made possible by grants from Lee County Electric Cooperative (LCEC) and Audubon of SWFL. The tower was originally installed in May 2024 and is re-installed each year in advance of the migration.

Each January, Robin works with FGCU’s Ornithology Club to prepare the Purple Martin Tower for upcoming nesting season. Students filled the “gourds” with nesting material before installing them on the tower along with the purple martin decoys that serve to attract scouts by creating the illusion of genuine colony site activity. Last year, 55 eggs were laid and 15 fledglings left the nest! Nesting activity is already underway this year with eggs having been spotted!

Remember to maintain a safe, respectful distance from all CREW wildlife and nesting infrastructure when you’re visiting!

To learn more about purple martins, visit the Purple Martin Conservation Association at www.purplemartin.org or on Instagram [@purplemartinconservation](https://www.instagram.com/purplemartinconservation).



NEST CHECK: STROLLING SCIENCE

Saturday,
April 11th,
2026
8:00am

EXPLORE HOW WE CAN
USE BIRD NESTS FOR
DATA COLLECTION
AND RESEARCH!

CREW FLINT PEN STRAND TRAILS
16470 HARRELL AVE, BONITA
SPRINGS, FL 34135

Sign up on
eventbrite



Spring
BUTTERFLY
COUNT



Wednesday, April 15th
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

CREW Flint Pen Strand Trails
16470 Harrell Ave, Bonita Springs, FL 34135

Register at crewtrust.eventbrite.com

SPRING BLOOMS AT SUNSET

Saturday,
April 18th,
2026
6:00pm

IT'S SPRING - HERE
COME THE
WILDFLOWERS!

CREW MARSH TRAILS
4600 CORKSCREW RD,
IMMOKALEE, FL 34142

Sign up on
eventbrite



SUNSET MINDFULNESS HIKE

WEDNESDAY,
MAY 6, 2026

6:30-8:30PM

CREW FLINT
PEN STRAND
TRAILS - LAKES
PARKING LOT



SIGN UP ON
EVENTBRITE

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