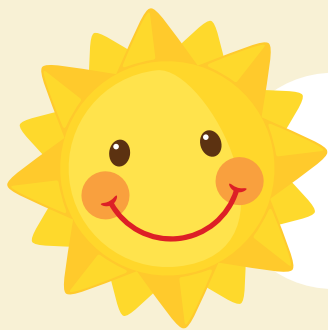


DISCOVER
200
1824 – 2024
ALACHUA COUNTY
BICENTENNIAL

Saving My Alachua 2026

"Florida Burrowing Owl"
Ginevra Serafin, 8th Grade
P.K. Yonge Developmental
Research School





DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE: A healthy environment is good for ALL living things – including humans. In addition to the obvious benefits of being able to breathe clean air and drink pure water, there is mounting evidence that just spending time in nature is good for your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Researchers have linked exposure to the natural world with a host of benefits such as stress reduction, increased happiness, and a reduced risk of psychiatric disorders. Experiments have found that even brief contact with nature can improve your working memory and ability to concentrate and pay attention. It can even have a positive effect on social interactions by increasing empathy, kindness, and cooperation. Nature is clearly good for us, so let’s be good to nature. By taking care of nature, you are also taking care of yourself!



PROTECT HABITAT & WILDLIFE

- Minimize or eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides in your yard.
- Make your yard wildlife friendly. Plant a pollinator garden and use native shrubs and trees to increase wildlife habitat.
- Minimize light pollution at night by turning off outdoor lights or using motion sensors, timers, or dimmers, and opting for warm-colored lights outdoors.



REDUCE PERSONAL POLLUTION

- Be energy aware. Turn off lights and electronics when not in use.
- Consolidate driving trips and walk or ride your bike whenever possible.
- Keep grass clippings and landscaping debris out of the streets.
- Do not litter. Secure items or trash from flying out of moving vehicles.
- Clean up after your pet. Scoop it! Bag it! Trash it!
- Purchase goods that are created with minimal packaging, transportation footprint, and impact on the environment.
- Report illegal dumping to 352-264-6800.
- Take household hazardous waste to your local HazWaste Collection Center.



CONSERVE WATER

- Save water outdoors by turning off automatic irrigation systems and run manually only when plants show signs of stress.
- Check your system regularly, promptly repair leaks, and remember the Alachua County irrigation restrictions are the *maximum* you can water.
- Hand watering with a garden hose is a great way to target only those plants that are actually thirsty.



“The Lazy Boat’s Stride”
Iyabo Olamina
11th Grade
Eastside High School



“Happy Lives in the Springs”
Katie Burklew
10th Grade
First Christian Academy



“Bat Houses”
Evelyn Manley
11th Grade
Eastside High School



Hazardous Waste Center

Hazardous Waste poses a threat to environmental health and human safety if not properly disposed.

What type of hazardous waste is accepted?

- Aerosol containers
- Automotive chemicals and filters
- Batteries (all types)
- Emergency flares
- E-scrap
- Flammable liquids and solids
- Fluorescent lamps and CFLs
- Household cleaners
- Lawn chemicals
- Paint products
- Pharmaceuticals
- Pool chemicals
- Propane tanks
- Sharps (syringes, needles, and lancets)
- Stale gas and diesel fuel
- Thermostats and thermometers
- Used cooking oil

Alachua County's Rural Collection Centers (RCCs)

Help us keep our beautiful Alachua County clean and free of trash and dumping! The five Rural Collection Centers are rural, regional facilities for the collection of recyclables, solid waste, yard trash, bulk items, and household hazardous waste. These facilities are for residential use only (commercial waste is prohibited).

What can I drop off at the RCC?

Recycling - Flattened, dry cardboard, paper, and paste board (cereal boxes), and commingled containers such as plastic bottles/jars, plastic yogurt/margarine tubs, aluminum, steel and tin containers, glass bottles/jars.

Garbage - Please place trash bags in available compactor or in dumpster if directed.

Yard Waste - Leaves, grass clippings, brush and small tree limbs. Remove yard waste from plastic bags before recycling and **do not include** boards, lumber, rocks, fencing, pallets, toys, or furniture.

Bulk Metals Recycling - Washers and dryers, stoves, grills, filing cabinets, metal exercise machines, metal patio furniture, metal roofing, bicycles, lawn mowers and other gas-powered equipment (must be empty of gas and oil).

Household Hazardous Waste - Oil filters, fluorescent lamps, rechargeable batteries, vehicle/boat batteries, computer equipment, electronics, and up to five gallons of waste oil and old paint per day are accepted.

“Green Heron”



Sophia Williams, 6th Grade
Oak Hall School

“Kumbayaaahhh!!!”



Cecilia Duda, 12th Grade
Eastside High School

“Wilderness and Harmony”



Kira Uriasieva, 9th Grade
Eastside High School

Main Location:

5125 NE 63rd Ave., Gainesville, FL 32609
Phone: 352-334-0440
Mon. – Fri., 7 AM – 5 PM, Sat. 8 AM – 12 PM
Closed: Sundays and holidays

Rural Collection Centers:

Mon., Tue., Fri. & Sat., 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Closed: Sundays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays

Archer Rural Collection Center:

19401 SW Archer Road
Phone: (352) 495-3257

Alachua/High Springs Rural Collection Center:

16929 NW US Highway 441
Phone: (386) 454-2563

Fairbanks Rural Collection Center:

9920 NE Waldo Road
Phone: (352) 334-3873

North Central Rural Collection Center:

10714 N SR 121
Phone: (352) 334-3875

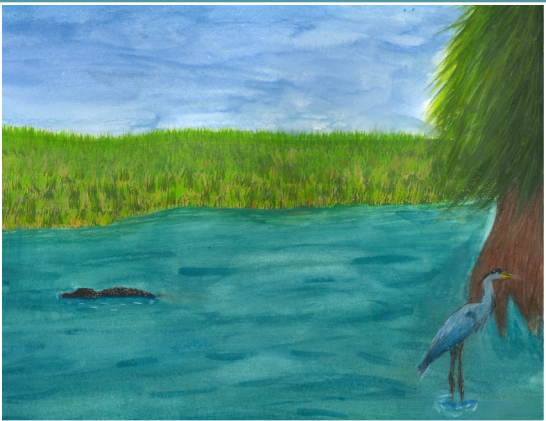
Phifer Rural Collection Center:

11700 SE Hawthorne Road
Phone: (352) 334-3874



"Tri-Colored Heron with Kingfisher" • Shyla Brunson • 5th Grade • Sunflower Homeschool

"Before Doom"



Amala Ramirez Krueger, 8th Grade
P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School

Wetlands are not only nature's filters, protecting water quality, but they are also important habitats and nursery areas for a majority of Florida's wildlife including birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles. The rich vegetation in wetlands and along riverbanks provides shelter and ample hiding places for young animals. Healthy wetlands support rich communities of plants, insects, and microbes that are important components of the food web. Count how many birds you see or hear on World Wetlands Day this February 2!

You can help us protect local waterways by reporting pollution. Call the Clean Creeks Hotline to report pollution or dumping in our creeks, lakes, and wetlands.



February 2026

S M T W T F S



"For many of us, water simply flows from a faucet, and we think little about it beyond this point of contact. We have lost a sense of respect for the wild river, for the complex workings of a wetland, for the intricate web of life that water supports." – Sandra Postel

	 World Wetlands Day					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28



"The Divided Earth: A Future in Our Hands" • Victoria Xu • 3rd Grade • Frazer School

"Rainbow Frog"



Presley Yates, 1st Grade
First Christian Academy

Stormwater runoff occurs when rainfall or irrigation water hits hard surfaces, and can result in pollutants like fertilizers, pet waste, and litter entering storm drains and nearby waterways. This runoff flows untreated into our creeks, lakes, and springs, harming wildlife and water quality.

You can help prevent stormwater pollution by using fertilizers only during allowable months (if at all), picking up after pets, and keeping streets and yards free of debris. If you have an irrigation system, make sure it is maintained regularly and that there is no overspray onto the pavement.



March 2026

s	m	t	w	t	f	s
1	2	3 World Wildlife Day	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Global Recycling Day	19	20 World Frog Day	21 International Day of Forests
22 World Water Day	23	24	25 Manatee Appreciation Day	26	27	28 Earth Hour
29	30	31	Help pollinators by joining the "No Mow March" movement and let it grow!			

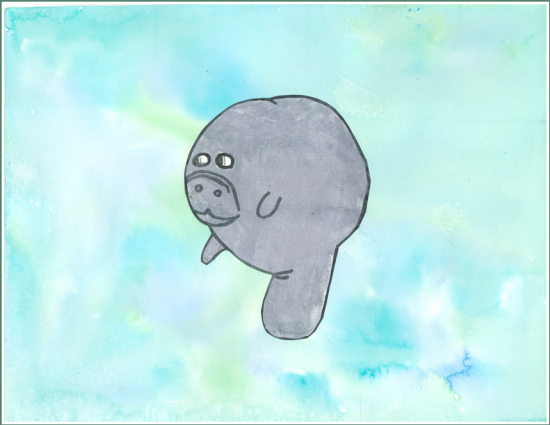


"The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land."
– Luna Leopold



"Florida Bluegill" • Harper Bullock • 11th Grade • Gainesville High School

"The Manatee"



Kate Logan, 2nd Grade
First Christian Academy

Beneath your feet flows the lifeblood of Florida, an ancient aquifer that feeds over 1,000 shimmering springs and delivers fresh water to every tap in Alachua County. Each April, during Water Conservation Month, we're reminded that this hidden treasure needs our care. The average person uses 150 gallons of water a day, but even small actions can make waves. Irrigate lawns less often, fix leaks, and keep showers to five minutes or less. When we conserve, we protect not just water, but the beauty, wildlife, and future of our home.



Check your rainfall shutoff device is functioning and set to "Active" and refer to the Irrigation Restriction table above. Watering is only allowed before 10am or after 4pm on designated days.

April 2026

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Irrigation Restrictions

Watering is allowed before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Location	Summer 2nd Sun in Mar - 1st Sat in Nov	Winter 1st Sun in Nov - 2nd Sat in Mar
Odd House #	Wed and/or Sat	Saturday
Even House #	Thur and/or Sun	Sunday
Other residential/ commercial	Tue and/or Fri	Tuesday

1

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World Aquatic Animal Day



International Bat Appreciation Day



National Arbor Day

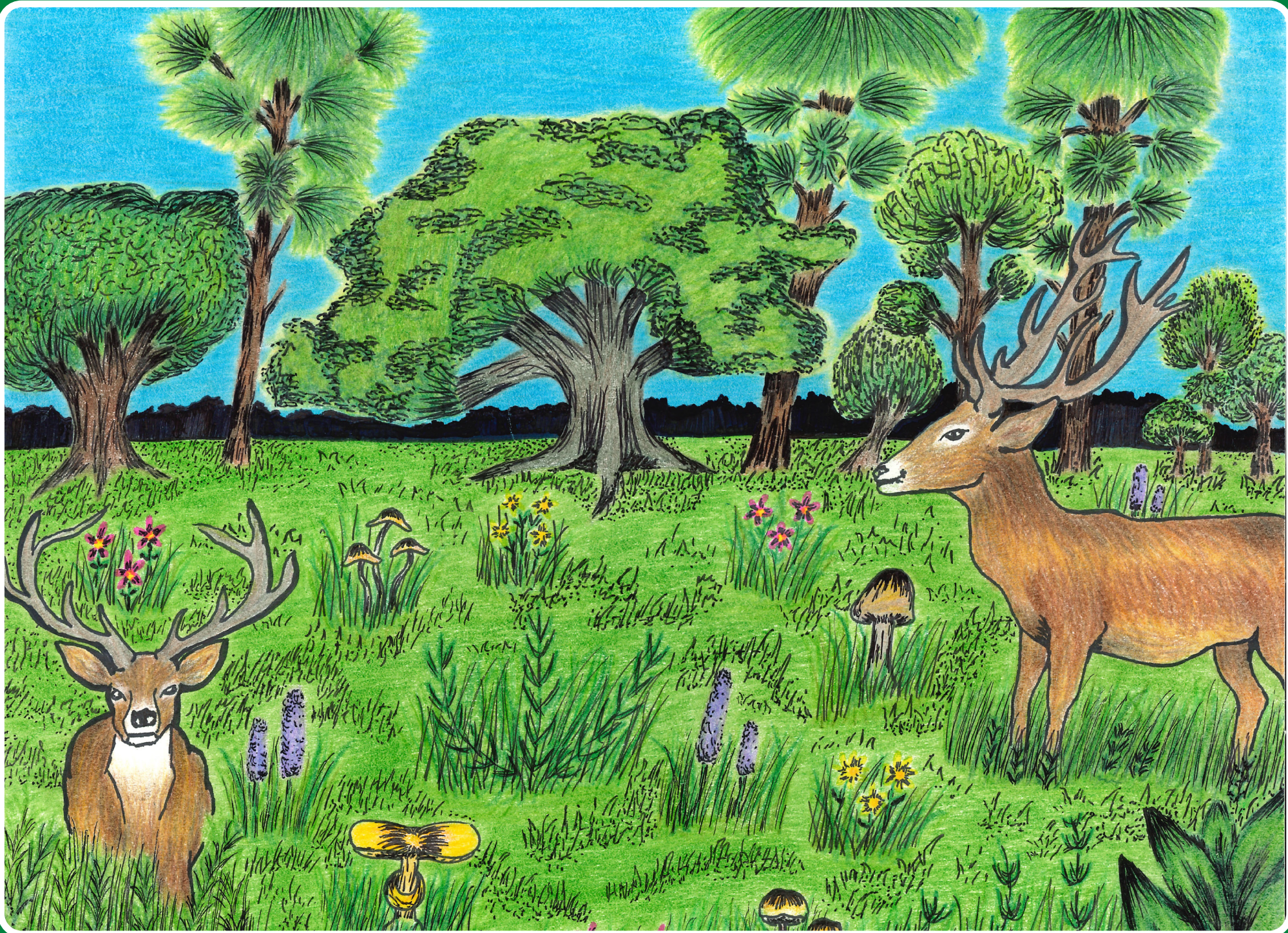
"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water."
– W. H. Auden



Earth Day



Save The Frogs Day



"The Deer's Haven" • Angelica Francisco-Jimenez • 11th Grade • Eastside High School

"Florida Panther"



Vivienne West, 7th Grade
Oak Hall School

What is biodiversity? Simply put, biodiversity is the entire makeup of life on earth. From the tallest trees to the smallest microbes, it includes all lifeforms and encompasses the relationships and processes that shape ecosystems and allow species, including our own, to survive. You can think of it like a puzzle with all the pieces connecting to form a much larger picture. If only one or two pieces are missing, you can still generally tell what the picture is supposed to be; however, if too many pieces are lost, it gets harder and harder for the picture to be clear, or for the system to function.

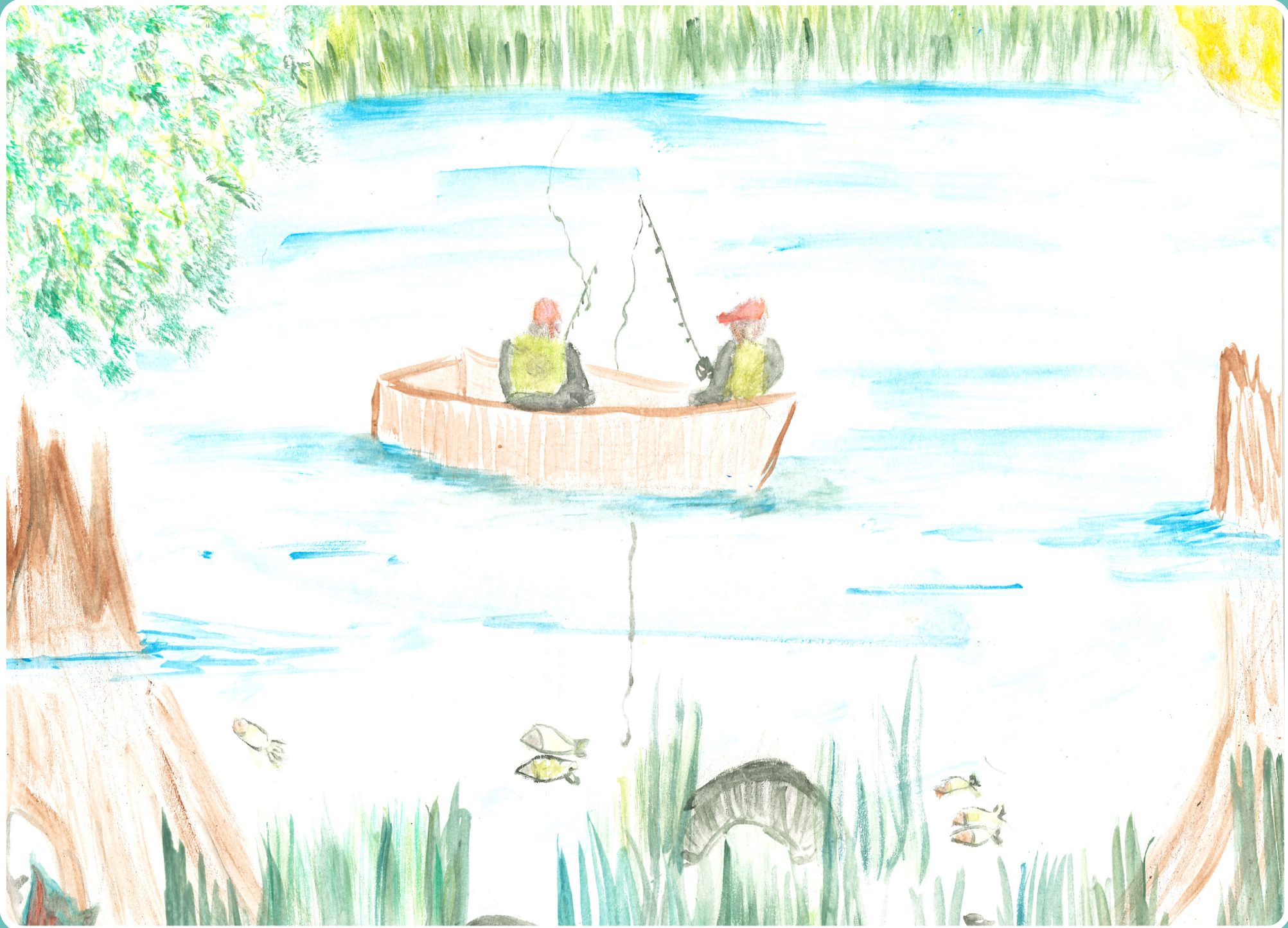
There are many direct threats to biodiversity today, including habitat loss, overconsumption, invasive species, pollution, and climate change. Fortunately, by understanding these threats, we can be better prepared to manage conservation challenges and adapt our actions to help ensure the health and integrity of ecological systems and the species they support.

May 2026

s m t w t f s

"Each species on our planet plays a role in the healthy functioning of natural ecosystems, on which humans depend." – William H. Schlesinger

						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	



"Tired of Fishing for Trash" • Bligh Komanski • 2nd Grade • The Rock School

'Nurture Nature'



Makayla Bryan, 8th Grade
First Christian Academy

People around the world celebrate World Environment Day in June. This day was established with an aim to raise awareness and take action on environmental concerns.

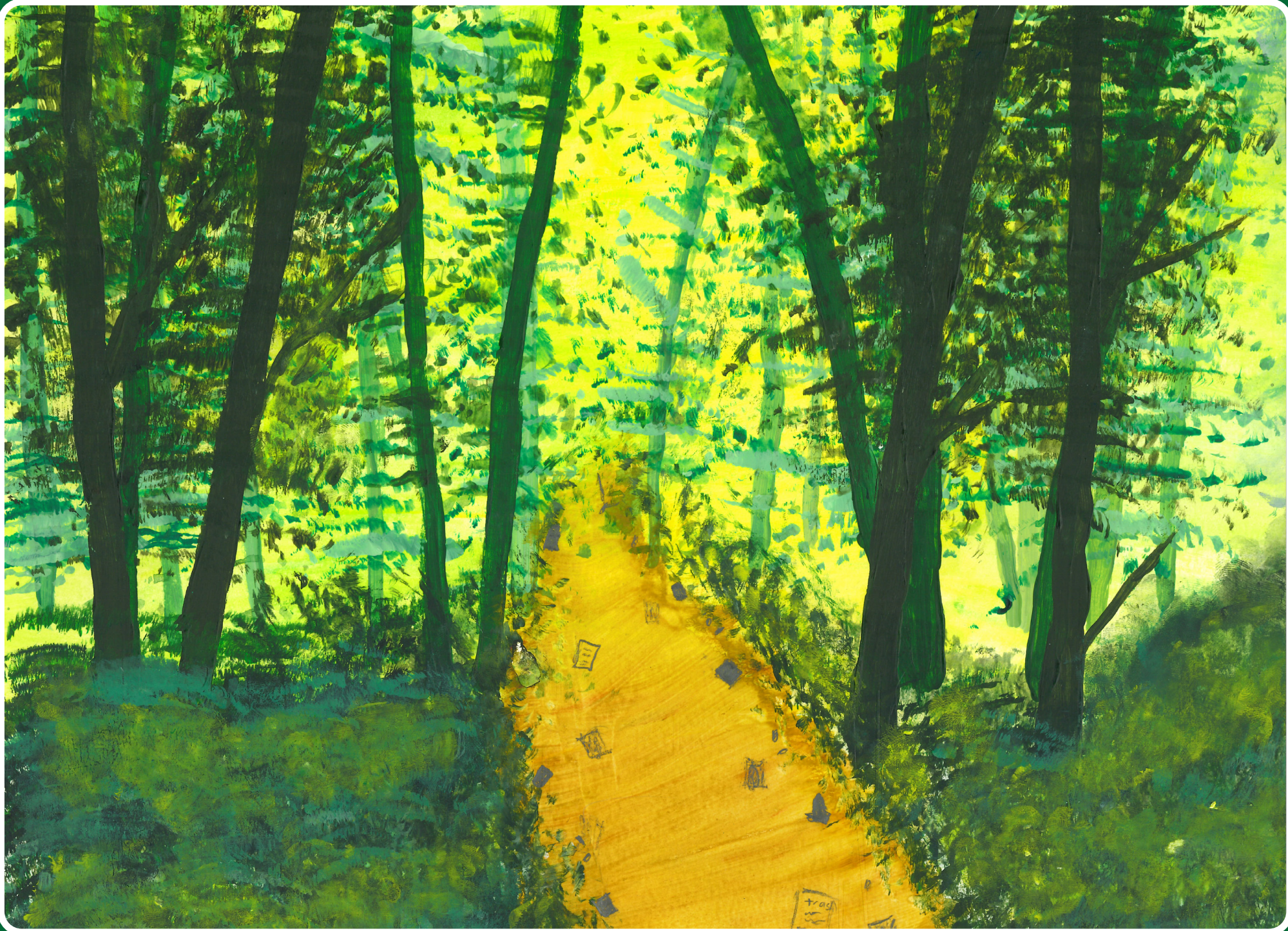
Today, our planet is facing many challenges including pollution, deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss. These can negatively impact plants, animals, and humans. For example, animals can die from eating plastic products, and desertification can reduce crop yields and lead to food insecurity.

You can do your part to alleviate some environmental problems and make the world a better place to live. Ways that you can help include using reusable items instead of single-use plastic products, not throwing trash in waterways, using water wisely, and planting native flowers and trees.

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." – Robert Swan

June 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					 World Environment Day	 National Trails Day
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	 World Oceans Day	8	9	10	11	12
	7	 National Pollinator Week	15	16	17	18
14					 Juneteenth	 American Eagle Day
 Father's Day	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30	 Check your Rain Sensor today! MyYardOurWater.org			
Embrace wildflowers and weeds to help pollinators!						



"Our Future Right Now" • Diana Salimova • 5th Grade • Bhaktivedanta Academy

'False Rebirth'



Samson Shulman, 10th Grade
East Side High School

Whether they run, swim, or fly, animals need space to get where they need to go. As more land is developed for human use, preserved green networks become vital connection points, linking sites that supply necessary resources for wildlife and allow animals to travel freely. Because so much of our natural landscape has already been altered by human activity, these protected wildlife corridors can use a little help to make them as ecologically viable as possible. Land management techniques might include removing invasive species, prescribed fire, hydrological restoration, planting native species, and forestry activities that increase species diversity and restore landscapes to more natural habitats over time.

But it's not just undeveloped wild spaces that can help animals survive. Our own yards can also provide critical habitats that support local ecosystems and animals. By planting native species that support wildlife, our yards can become vital stopovers to promote safe wildlife movement and protect the ecosystems we rely on.

July 2026

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"Woods are rich with biodiversity, and, above all, places of trees and light that spangles a thousand greens through the leaves."
– Monty Don

			1	2	3	Independence Day 4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	World Snake Day 16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	World Nature Conservation Day 28	29	30	31	



"See from their View" • Karlyn Snyder • 4th Grade • Expressions Learning Arts Academy

"Cypress Swamp in Evening"



Daniela Dodds, 5th Grade
Constellation Charter School

August is typically the hottest month of the year, and it's only getting warmer. The number of "extremely hot" days we experience in Alachua County are projected to increase ten-fold by 2100. While some people can survive and thrive in the intense summer heat and humidity, others are especially vulnerable and must take extra precautions to protect their health. Stay cool by drinking lots of water, dressing light for the weather, and avoiding strenuous activities during the peak heat of the day. And don't forget that our pets, animals, and wildlife also feel the effects of extreme heat; do your part to keep them protected, hydrated, and healthy.

To stay safe and find respite during extreme heat waves, you can visit any of Alachua County's public libraries, the MLK Center, Clarence R. Kelly Center, or Eastside Community Center at Cone Park, all of which serve as community cooling centers. You can also stay prepared for extreme heat by signing up to receive local emergency notifications (text 'ALACHUA' to 888-777) or visiting alachuacountyready.com.

August 2026

S M T W T F S



"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time." – Sir John Lubbock

						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24					
30	31	25	26	27	28	29



"Love Bugs" • Sina Etemadi • 12th Grade • Eastside High School

"Bison on the Prairie"



Ansley Jett, 7th Grade
High Springs Community School

Wetlands are an important part of the water cycle in Florida. These simple-looking marshes and boggy woodlands help to filter the water and remove contaminants before it recharges the Floridan aquifer. Wetlands, like Paynes Prairie, are also important wildlife habitats that support many kinds of plant and animal life key to Florida's natural ecosystems.

Florida lies upon layers of limestone deposited over many millions of years as the sea levels rose and fell. The limestone is slowly dissolved by the acidic groundwater from wetlands and rain that picks up atmospheric carbon dioxide and creates a weak acid. This forms the aquifer beneath our feet. Paynes Prairie is an example of a karst plain called a *polje*.

Explore the many parks and public spaces in Alachua County where you can relax and enjoy the wildlife and learn about the interaction of humans and the environment in which we live.

September 2026

s	m	t	w	t	f	s
		1	2	3	 National Wildlife Day	4
6	 Labor Day	7	8	9	10	11
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
 World Cleanup Day	21	22	23	24	25	 National Public Lands Day
 World Rivers Day	28	29	30	"We share this planet with many species. It is our responsibility to protect them, both for their sakes and our own." – Pamela A. Matson		



"River Otter, Heron, Pirate Perch, & Round-Tailed Muskrat" • Pepper Durant • 6th Grade • Laniakea Montessori School

"Egret"



Maeve Martin, 1st Grade
Laniakea Montessori School

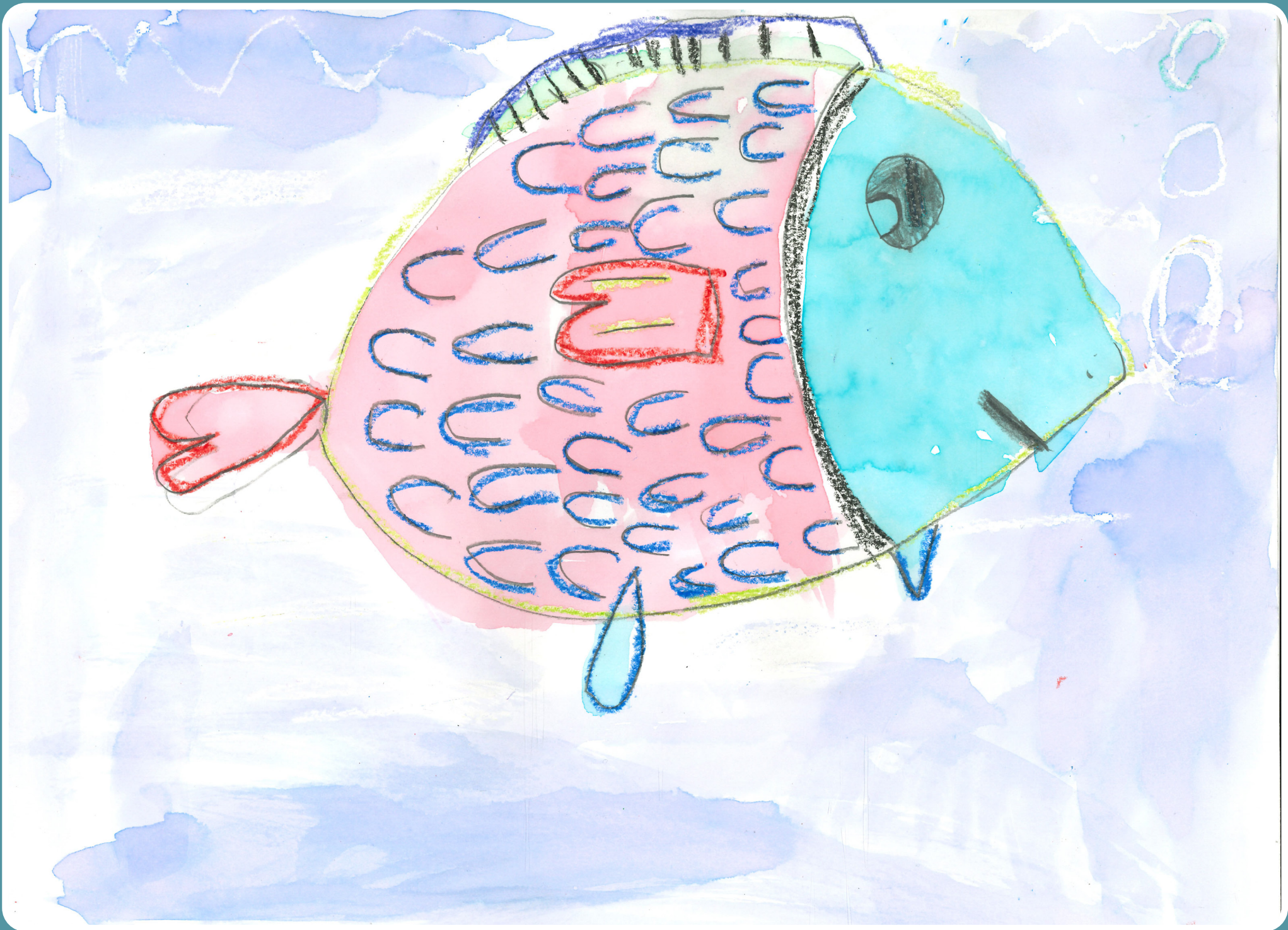
Every animal, from the tiniest insect to the largest mammal, plays a unique role in the balance of nature. Whether in forests, deserts, oceans, or grasslands, animals rely on healthy habitats to find food, raise young, and shelter from predators and the elements. When these spaces are lost or degraded, entire ecosystems can begin to unravel.

World Animal Day on October 4th and World Habitat Day on October 5th remind us that protecting animals means protecting the places they call home. Conservation isn't just about saving individual species—it's also about preserving the connections between creatures and the landscapes that sustain them. By respecting and restoring wild spaces, we help ensure a thriving planet for all living things, including ourselves.



October 2026

s m t w t f s						
				<i>"Nature is not a place to visit, it is home." – Gary Snyder</i>		
				1	2	3
 World Animal Day 4	 World Habitat Day 5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



"Untitled" • Liam Young • Kindergarten • First Christian Academy

"A River in the Sunset"



Braxton Brown, 3rd Grade
Williams Elementary School

Manatee Awareness Month is celebrated in November every year as manatees begin migrating into the warm water refuges of springs for the winter. But manatees are not the only aquatic creatures that deserve awareness. All waterbodies, including creeks, lakes, rivers, or springs, are critical habitat for a variety of wildlife. Alligators, turtles, otters, birds, and fish are just some of the animals that rely on a healthy ecosystem to survive. The water is their home, and we are just visitors.

There are simple ways to protect aquatic habitats:

- Don't walk on aquatic plants
- Give wildlife space (2 – kayak distances)
- Don't trash where you splash
- Report harassment or animals in need of help to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (1-888-404-FWCC)

"A river is more than an amenity. It is a treasure." – Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr

November 2026

S	m	t	w	t	f	s
 Irrigation Restrictions Change 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10  Veterans Day 11	12	13	14	
 America Recycles Day 15	16	17  Take A Hike Day/National Hiking Day	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26  Thanksgiving Day	27	28
29	30	 FERTILIZER BANNED JULY - FEBRUARY		Report healthy manatee sightings to the Florida Springs Heartland Manatee Sighting Network! 		



"Helping Hand" • Jaden Alfonzo • 12th Grade • First Christian Academy

"Gaze by the Lake"



Xiaoting Zeng, 9th Grade
East Side High School

In Florida, December is a great time to go bird watching. Many migratory birds are in the area this month. Get outside and enjoy some time in the natural world! You might hear birds singing, or you may even get to see some species of birds that are only here during this time of year.

Birds provide many ecological benefits for us, including pollinating crops so we have food to eat, and eating insects that are pests in farms and gardens. Sadly, some bird species are on the decline and could possibly go extinct in the future. It is important to protect bird species by preserving forests and water resources, as they provide habitats and food for birds.

Did you know ... the Audubon Society holds their "Christmas Bird Count" each year in December? If you would like to participate, please visit: www.christmasbirdcount.org

December 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13		14	15	16	17	18
19						
20	21	22	23	24		25
26						
27	28	29	30	31	"There is an unreasonable joy to be had from the observation of small birds going about their bright, oblivious business." – Grant Hutchinson	

Get out and **EXPLORE**

There is simply no better way to gain an appreciation for the natural environment than to go out and explore it, canoe it, hike it, bike it... you get the idea! Below are some of our favorite Alachua County Forever Preserves.

Preserve Name	Location	Description	Activities
Barr Hammock Preserve - Levy Prairie	14920 SE 11th Dr, Micanopy	This Preserve is accessible from the northern entrance off of SE 11th Drive. The 6.5-mile Levy Loop Trail encircles a wet prairie and offers vistas along the unshaded northern trail. Spring and fall wildflowers, and migratory birds in fall and winter. Southern portion of loop is shaded.	  NO DOGS
Barr Hammock Preserve - South Entrance	300 SE 175th Ave, Micanopy	13 miles of shared, forested trails; a favorite loop for hikers is the Bayhead trail; for equestrians, the Hammock Trail. If you are up for a long hike or ride, the Landing Overlook offers magnificent views.	   
Buck Bay Preserve	6502 N County Rd. 225, Gainesville	Multiple trails loop through pine flatwoods habitat, ranging from 0.7 miles to 2.5 miles in length.	  
Four Creeks Preserve	6845 NW 37th St, Gainesville	A partnership property with the City of Gainesville, with a 2.5-mile walking loop trail through pine and hardwood forests. Trail can be flooded during wet periods. There is currently no parking at this preserve.	  NO BIKES
Fox Pen Preserve	Near 10777 Holden Park Road in Hawthorne	A 1-mile-long trail loop through pine and wetland habitat. A partnership project with Alachua Conservation Trust.	  
Lake Alto Preserve - North	14500 County Rd 1471, Waldo	3.5 miles of unpaved trails accessible from the Preserve entrance off of CR 1471, or from the boat dock on Lake Alto. Look for black bear tracks in the north portion of the preserve.	   
Lake Alto Preserve - South	18795 NE 132nd Ave, Waldo	The 1.2-mile Canal Loop is accessible from NE 132nd Ave, less than 1/2 mi east of CR 1471. Wildflowers abound in fall near the entrance.	   
Longleaf Flatwoods Preserve	Main parking area located on CR 325, about 2.3 mi south of Hawthorne Rd/SR 20.	Managed by St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), the Preserve features relatively intact natural communities including sandhill, mesic flatwoods, and cypress swamps. Wildflowers can be plentiful spring thru fall. Group camping is available by reservation only at https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/camping .	    
Mill Creek Preserve	14505 NW County Road 236, Alachua (just west of the intersection with CR 241)	This Preserve features about 5 miles of trails and the southernmost extent of American beech trees. There are several easy-to-moderate marked loop trails of various lengths. See migratory birds in fall.	  NO BIKES
Newnans Lake Conservation Area	3 tracts: Hatchet Creek Tract trailhead is 0.9 mile east of the Hatchet Creek bridge on SR 26; North Tract Trailhead is on CR 234, 2.2 mi south of SR 26; South Tract Trailhead is located next to Owen Illinois Park at the end of SE 16th Ave in Windsor.	Managed by SJRWMD, the best time to visit this area is winter, as some trails can be wet and buggy during the summer, and there are trail closures during hunting season in fall and spring. Horses are limited to the Hatchet Creek and North Tracts. Group camping is available by reservation only at https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/camping .	     
Phifer Flatwoods Preserve	Parking area located at 12243 SE County Rd 2082 on the Gainesville Hawthorne State Trail (GHST)	Four different short trails (ranging from 0.5 miles to 1.3 miles) through pine flatwoods near wetland areas. Trails are accessible from the Gainesville Hawthorne State Trail.	   
Poe Springs Park	28800 NW 182nd Ave, High Springs	This park offers swimming in the springs, picnic facilities, play areas as well as hiking trails. Parking fee is \$6 per vehicle.	  
Serenola Forest Preserve	Near the intersection of SW 21st Street and SW 49th Ave., near Idylwild Elementary School	A 1-mile trail loops through a diverse hardwood forest. Two street parking spots by the main trail head, but trail access is primarily by foot or bike. Managed by Alachua Conservation Trust.	  
Sweetwater Preserve	2 trailheads: one at 309 SE 16th Ave, Gainesville; the other located north of Boulware Springs City Park (3300 SE 15th St, Gainesville) on the GHST	The 1.75-mile West Trail accessible from SE 16th Ave. offers full shade along Sweetwater Branch. It connects to the 1.2-mile Sandy Trail (parking at Boulware Springs), which weaves through 8 different natural communities.	  
Turkey Creek Preserve	2 trailheads: Main Trailhead (with parking) located at 6300 NW 93rd Ave, Alachua; the other, Pedestrian Trailhead (no parking) located at 10182 NW 59th Terr, Alachua	Features 5 miles of unpaved trails over rolling topography through a variety of habitat types. All trails can be accessed from either trailhead, and there is also a ½ mile Fitness Trail with 7 exercise stations to add a workout to your visit. Please refer to exercise equipment rules and instructions found onsite.	   
Watermelon Pond Park and Preserve	10700 SW 250th St, Newberry	A marshy, sandhill lake, accessible for shallow water boaters from the boat ramp at Watermelon Pond Park.	  



Hiking/Nature Trails



Horseback Riding Trails



Dogs on leash



Fishing



Bicycling Trails



Group Camping (reservation only)



Boat Ramp



Hunting (during season)