ARCHBOLD APRIL 2024 NEWS

for curious minds

Archbold
BIOLOGICAL STATION

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Hip Hip for Harebells

Stacy Smith, previous Archbold Plant Ecology Research Assistant, marks a tiny Avon Park Harebells plant in our long-term monitoring plot in the Carter Creek tract of the Lake Wales Ridge WEA. Photo by Jennifer Brown from Surviving Fire film.

Of all the rare plants that occur only on the Lake Wales Ridge, the critically imperiled Avon Park Harebells (*Crotalaria avonensis*) may be the rarest of the rare. Just three wild populations exist as 'islands' surrounded by developed scrub in northern Highlands County and southern Polk County. Avon Park Harebells resprouts vigorously after fire in sandy open areas of Scrubby Flatwoods and Oak-Rosemary scrub. Learn more in our film Surviving Fire: In the Florida Scrub. This tiny, yellow-flowered pea with silver leaf hairs faces numerous challenges including low seedling success, herbivores, and surrounding development. **Archbold began monitoring populations of Avon Park Harebells in the late 1990s under Dr. Eric Menges, Emeritus Research Biologist of Plant Ecology.** In 2012, Archbold partnered with Bok Tower Gardens and the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden to establish a new population in the Silver Lake Unit of the state-owned Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area using sowed seeds and propagated transplants from an unprotected population in Avon Park. **A decade later, Dr. Aaron David, Program Director of Plant Ecology, analyzed extensive monitoring data to evaluate the success of the experimental introduction.** Dr. David and Andee Naccarato, former Archbold Plant Ecology Research Assistant, write in a new article in The Palmetto magazine, "From the data, it was apparent that the transplant strategy was much more successful than seeds for introducing a new population. Even better, the transplant population was expanding via clonal offshoots and recruiting a second generation via new seedlings." Using lessons from these efforts, the Archbold Plant Ecology Program plans an introduction at a new site for later in 2024. Good news for Avon Park Harebells, though the journey to recovery remains long. Read their full research paper published recently in Restoration Ecology.

"Archbold Biological Station is one of America's iconic centers of continuous research and education in field biology. It is a prototype of what we need all across America."

Edward O. Wilson

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Your donation to Archbold today supports our mission to build and share the scientific knowledge necessary to protect the life, lands, and waters of Florida and beyond.

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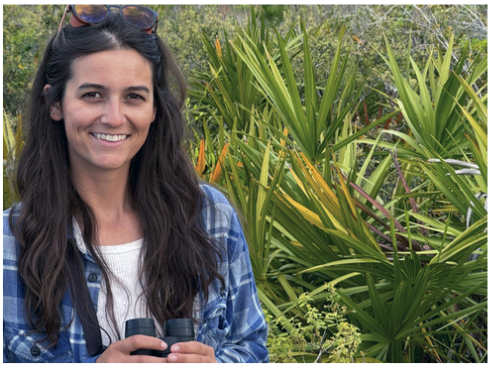
Madison Medal Award

Photo courtesy of John W. Fitzpatrick.

Every year for the last 50 years, Princeton University has awarded the James Madison Medal to a distinguished alum of their Graduate School. **Dr. John Fitzpatrick (Fitz), Archbold Board Member and Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CLO) Emeritus Director, was the recipient of the award on February 24, 2024.** Watch him accept and deliver a short talk here**.** Fitz says, "This is the first time an awardee has been in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Exactly 50 years ago, I started as a graduate student at Princeton, so I feel very honored." Known today as North America's most prominent ornithologist, a Princeton publication describes his early fascination with birds growing up in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He participated in his first Christmas Bird Count when he was just 6-years old. Two years later, Fitz began learning birdsongs from a CLO vinyl record. Little did he know, he would one day direct that esteemed institution for 26 years, including overseeing the launch of eBird, one of the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen science projects. During Fitz's expeditions to Peru for his Ph.D. at Princeton, his team discovered five birds new to science. Friend and colleague Dr. Scott Robinson describes his graduate study of 400+ species of elusive tyrant flycatchers in Central and South America as unprecedented. Fitz says, "It was genuine fundamental human curiosity about the evolutionary biology of this amazingly cool, very large radiation of birds." His curiosity led him to the Field Museum of Chicago, Archbold, as our Executive Director (1988-1995), and the CLO. Throughout his career, Fitz kept his feet in the Archbold sandy scrub and his eyes on his beloved Florida Scrub-Jay. **He first visited Archbold in 1972 as a Harvard University undergraduate intern, returning almost yearly to map scrub-jay territories.** Congratulations, Fitz, on this well-deserved honor!

Beating Heart of Conservation



Tori Bakley in the Florida scrub at Archbold. Photo by Linda Gette.

Tori Bakley grew up along the developed Atlantic Coastal Ridge in Merritt Island, Florida. At Florida State University, she learned about the Florida Scrub-Jay and looked up nearby locations on eBird. Her first scrub-jay encounter was less than two miles from her home at the Helen & Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary in 2017. After college, she spent a life-changing year in Indonesia studying Orangutans, followed by a job in California with Acorn Woodpeckers. In March 2021, she arrived at Archbold on the southern Lake Wales Ridge. She says, "Although I grew up in a land that was once scrub, I never spent more than an hour or two in scrub preserves. I was captivated by the beauty and uniqueness of this undeveloped piece of Florida. It was bittersweet to learn the inner workings of the scrub ecosystem so intimately while also knowing that a place like this was torn apart for my hometown." After her internship, Bakley became a Research Assistant in Archbold's Avian Ecology Program. "Archbold has endless opportunities to build my skills, expand my network, and learn more about a place so close to my heart." Bakley became a certified wildland firefighter to be part of Archbold's prescribed fire crew managing the scrub. She said, "**I've come to understand that everything is connected, not just nature within itself, but particularly the link between the government and conservation, and the impact voting has on our work and our future**." See how Bakley's eagle-eye birding skills help a Federally Threatened Indigo Snake in our short video Team Indigo.

Job Announcements

Human Resources Specialist

Ranch Administrative Assistant

Environmental Education Internship

Plant Ecology Internship

Public Events

April 6: 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

'Plants & People'

Dustin Angell, Archbold

Learn more here

April 11: 3:30 PM-4:30 PM

'Belowground Effects on Aboveground Dynamics: How Soil Microbes Affect Plant Communities'

Dr. Gaurav Kandlikar, Louisiana State University

Join in-person or Zoom

Passcode: 171471

April 25: 3:30 PM-4:00 PM

Details coming soon here

Tim Legare, Archbold Intern

May 7: 3:30 PM-4:00 PM

Details coming soon here

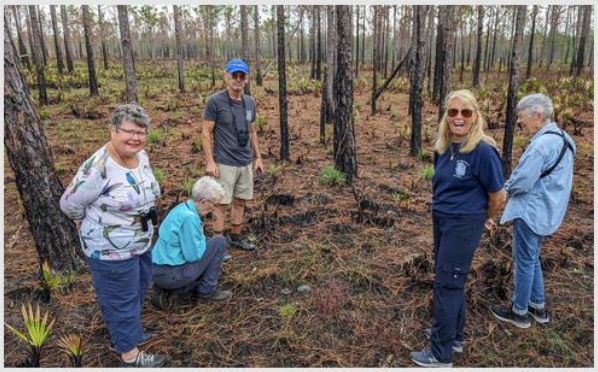
Genevieve Triplett, Archbold Intern

June 6: 3:30 PM-4:30 PM

Details coming soon here

Dr. Jen Miller, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Longleaf Foray



Archbold volunteers exploring recently burned Longleaf at the Platt Branch WEA. Photo by Dustin Angell

Every year, Archbold takes time to give back to the volunteers who give us so much, from assisting wildlife research, facilitating nature tours, and helping with Summer Ecology Camp. **On March 18, Archbold coordinated a field trip for ten volunteers to** Platt Branch Wildlife and Environmental Area **with Steve Shattler**, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Biologist. Archbold Education Program Director Dustin Angell says, "Platt Branch was a wonderful treat. It was so beautiful, and we had great weather. Steve gave us a short talk on the history and land management. The highlight was visiting a recently burned Longleaf pineland." **Long-time volunteer Linda Gette says, "Everyone was thrilled when a flock of endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers showed up! We also found several endangered Many-flowered Grass-pink orchids (*Calopogon multiflorus*) in the burned area."** Gette began volunteering for Archbold ten years ago. She said, "I am still in awe of Archbold's research and the dedicated people who make it happen. Thanks to Alice Oldford, Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Caldwell, Education Assistant, and Dustin Angell for a lovely outing. I truly love the people here." After the exciting pineland excursion, the group enjoyed lunch at the Archbold Learning Center. We sincerely appreciate Linda and all our volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer, learn more here.

Fire & Fronds

Burned palmettos at Archbold. Photo by Reed Bowman.

Palmettos, with their green fronds and long alligator-back trunks, are important pillars of Florida ecosystems. Palmettos are shelter. They are food. They are fibers for nests. Without palmettos, many of Florida's ecosystems would look drastically different. Seemingly invincible, palmettos can live for thousands of years with the right conditions, which include being burned regularly by fire. Historically, lightning-ignited wildfires were a natural part of the ecosystem. In much of Florida today, regular, prescribed fire is used to mimic natural fire cycles, and is imperative for ecosystem function and protecting infrastructure. Archbold scientists have been studying the role of fire in ecosystems since the 1970s, building some of the most informative datasets on fire ecology in the world. These data provide insights and guide recommendations for land managers across the state, directly impacting the survival of Florida's rare species, some of which only exist here. **Please help** support **Archbold's long-term ecological studies, critical for informing Florida's conservation efforts.**

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The Scrub Blog

Nature and Science from Florida's Heartland

Explore The Scrub Blog by Archbold creative staff.

Directions to Archbold Biological Station

Eight miles south of Lake Placid. Entrance is 1.8 miles south of SR 70 on Old SR 8.