

https://www.midfloridanewspapers.com/highlands_news-sun/corona_coverage/archbold-provides-free-online-learning/article_e5181f7c-7834-11ea-928d-17420116296b.html

Archbold provides free online learning

Archbold Biological Station

Apr 8, 2020



As the people of Highlands County adjust to the first week of the Governor’s “Safer at Home” order, many are tackling home projects or finding time to check out new TV shows, while also trying to stay connected and safe. Parents, teachers and students are living in a new world, with the difficult responsibility of sustaining learning goals without attending

school in person, or visiting parks and museums. Archbold Biological Station is excited to offer some support to our community with a variety of free online learning events, educational science resources and social media content.

“Earlier last month, we spent two weeks in emergency planning mode, closing down Archbold to the public, canceling field trips and developing work-from-home and social isolation procedures” said Archbold’s Director of Education Dustin Angell. “After all the planning we recognized we had a chance to respond more broadly for our community, it was clear that through technology we could still offer two important things: science learning experiences and the solace of nature.”

During April, Archbold will be offering free online streaming events twice a week. On Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. Angell will host Archbold’s Discovery Classroom, a 25-minute live and interactive virtual field trip for all ages. On Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. Archbold’s Seminar Speaker Series will offer presentations on a variety of topics. This Thursday’s talk is called, “Hicoria: A Brief History of a Florida Ghost Town,” with Joe Gentili, Archbold’s Librarian. Joe will cover the fascinating history of the rise and fall of a Highlands County town in the early 1900’s. Both of these series are made possible with the popular video-conferencing app called Zoom. Participants must go to Archbold’s website to register, as space is limited.

Those visiting Archbold’s Facebook page will notice a new video called “Misty Morning: Hatpin Season” from Into Nature Films. The beautiful and relaxing video, along with others planned by Archbold, are designed to offer solace in nature. The series, called ‘Wonders from Wonderland’ is an homage to the late Dr. Thomas Eisner, a pioneering ecologist who, in his autobiography, titled a chapter about Archbold “The Wonders of Wonderland.” The series will have new material and also repost some of our earlier films and photography.

Archbold’s Executive Director Dr. Hilary Swain hopes the public will be able to take advantage of Archbold’s online educational offerings. “We are renowned as a field station, because we have multiple decades-long research projects and an established education program for the local community. We are in the fortunate position to share what we know. Our network of researchers, educators, and filmmakers collaborate to make beautiful videos and science curriculum materials. These are always available online at no charge. Archbold staff have also started participating in Highlands County public school system online classes; for example, I recently enjoyed being the guest speaker with a presentation

about wildlife on Florida ranches for a Lake Placid Middle School agriculture class.”

For those curious about Gopher Tortoises and Florida Scrub-Jays, or about collaborations between ‘Cowboys and Scientists’, or generally learning more about Archbold, many videos on these subject can be found on Archbold’s YouTube channel or Archbold’s Vimeo channel. Parents, teachers, homeschoolers and other youth education groups looking for lessons on Highlands County wildlife and ecology, can check out the Elementary School Resources page, which has a number of downloadable projects.

Its three “Science in the Scrub” curriculum modules showcase indoor activities, while the 100-plus page “Discovering Florida Scrub” curriculum is full of outdoor activities specific to the sandy Florida scrub habitat in our area. Some projects could even be done in a backyard. The same page on the website also has a free digital copy of the Florida Scrub Coloring Book which could provide endless hours of coloring for adults and children alike. Anyone wanting to get up-to-date information about Archbold can register online to receive the Archbold monthly newsletter “News for Curious Minds.”

Archbold’s Director of Philanthropy, Deborah Pollard, is part of Archbold’s Community Engagement Team, which was formed recently and tasked with developing the new online material, live-streaming events, and other content. Even in these difficult times, she is optimistic about the role of new technologies to bring us together.

She explains, “Connecting with our community has been a priority for Archbold. We are making an effort to create and expand meaningful, local content, distributed through the Highlands News-Sun, and via social media. By using simple technology, the public can ‘visit with Archbold’ right from their own homes during this global pandemic. I love this, as some members of our community have never been to the Archbold campus. Now, everyone with computer access can connect with us easily right from home. Stay tuned. And please stay safe.”

A Moody

