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## Archbold weathers Hurricane Ian

Special to Highlands News-Sun Courtesy Archbold Biological Station

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Wind gust speeds recorded at the main Archbold weather station during Hurricane Ian on Sept. 28.

COURTESY PHOTO

VENUS — By the morning of Monday, Sept. 26, the predicted path of Hurricane Ian had shifted south. Researchers at Archbold Biological Station and Archbold's Buck Island Ranch decided it was necessary to remove sensitive equipment and sensors from the field to prevent damage from the storm. Archbold's Agroecology Program staff removed the Ranch's five advanced 'eddy flux towers' from pastures, which include large, fragile, solar panels and many delicate sensors.

Additionally, they took down 32 rain exclusion shelters, part of a long-term study, from eight pastures. Ranch Operations staff stayed with the cattle and prepared Ranch buildings for the incoming storm. Station staff checked on experiments, brought in equipment, and secured the Station buildings. The path of Hurricane Ian had further shifted by Tuesday evening and some Ranch residents evacuated.

Hurricane Ian made landfall early afternoon on Wednesday, Sept. 28 and those sheltering at the

Station started watching the storm's path, checking the radar plots frequently. Archbold's main weather station started recording tropical storm force max wind gusts around 2 p.m. Wednesday afternoon. By 6 p.m., Archbold's weather station started recording hurricane force max wind gusts. Hurricane Ian crossed State Road 70 around 8 p.m. as a Category 3 hurricane, during which the Station recorded maximum gusts of up to 96.3 mph. Archbold's Buck Island Ranch, just east of the Station on SR 70, recorded maximum gusts of up to 68 mph.

The maximum gust Archbold recorded during Hurricane Ian was just slightly lower than the maximum gust recorded at the Station during Hurricane Irma in 2017 (97.4 mph). While the wind speeds experienced at Archbold during Hurricanes Irma and Ian were comparable, Hurricane Ian did not bring as much rain. The Station recorded 8.85 inches of rain over the course of Hurricane Irma, while over the course of Hurricane Ian, the Station recorded half as much rain at 4.28 inches. The Ranch received 3.88 inches of rain during Hurricane Ian.

Archbold Executive Director Hilary Swain and staff surveyed the Station for damage on Thursday morning. The main buildings had no major structural damage, though the Station's historic roofs experience some tile damage. While the whole campus was a disheveled mess of tree limbs, leaves, and debris, there were not as many downed trees as experienced during Hurricane Irma. Amazingly, only one tree fell on a building and it did not cause significant damage. The Ranch had areas of flooding, though no major damage to structures.

Swain noted that "Archbold is grateful to have survived Hurricane Ian relatively unscathed. We are thankful to our dedicated staff who moved sensitive equipment so quickly, helped us throughout the storm and especially during cleanup, and who have since returned the equipment to the field after the storm. We extend our thoughts to all our neighbors and the communities in Highlands County and throughout southwest and central Florida who went through this storm, especially those who have suffered more severe damage."

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