

# LEMON BAY NEWSLETTER CONSERVANCY<sup>®</sup>

Fall 2025 Volume 55, Issue 1

## *Investing in Lemon Bay's Future*

For over 50 years, **Lemon Bay Conservancy** has been a tireless guardian of the bays, estuaries, and fragile ecosystems that make this place so special. Our mission to protect and preserve this natural region has never been more vital.

Thanks to you, our members, donors, and volunteers, our success is visible across the region: from the restoration work and educational programming at **Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve**, to our support of **Juvenile Tarpon Research** and crucial **Lemon BayWatch** efforts like **Seagrass Monitoring** and **Clam Research**.

Moreover, we are actively launching new conservation efforts, including our important new endeavor to acquire properties that will support **Burrowing Owl Habitat Protection**. These hands-on activities are protecting habitats, providing environmental education, and advocating for sustainable policies.

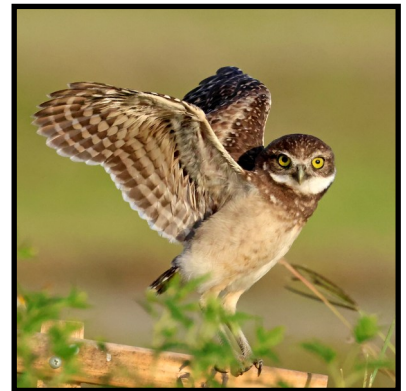
As we enter 2026, we are embarking on a bold new direction — a clear path to elevate our work and impact — and we need your support to make it happen! The Conservancy is actively seeking a passionate and visionary **Executive Director**. Hiring this new leader will immediately elevate our capacity for growth. The Executive Director will be instrumental in helping us develop a future vision and guiding us to the next level of effectiveness.

Will you **boldly reach forward** with us to build on our successes and expand our role in protecting our fragile local environment? We need your memberships and generous financial donations to achieve our vision and successfully execute both our existing work and our new conservation goals.

***Thank you for your commitment to protecting our environment and for supporting Lemon Bay Conservancy!***

## *Our Mission:*

Lemon Bay Conservancy works to protect the wildlife and natural habitats of Lemon Bay, Gasparilla Sound, and their watersheds through land preservation and restoration, water quality initiatives, environmental education, and advocacy for sustainable conservation policies.



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***Please take a few minutes TODAY to send your contribution. To reduce expenses, we will not be mailing a separate year-end funding appeal.***

### ***Three ways to contribute:***

- (1) Go to [LemonBayConservancy.org](https://LemonBayConservancy.org) and click "Support Our Cause." From there you can renew your membership or make a special donation.
- (2) Use the form on the last page of this newsletter to mail your gift.
- (3) Use the QR code on the next page to submit your 2026 membership.



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Visit our website, or use this QR  
Code to join or renew your LBC  
membership.

## LBC Board News

**New Board Members:** We are pleased to welcome Mark Horan and Loulie Mauran to our LBC Board! Both are long-time LBC members who share our passion for protecting our local environment and will bring valuable perspectives to the board.



You can read more about Loulie and Mark on our website at [LemonBayConservancy.org/about/board](http://LemonBayConservancy.org/about/board).

**Call for Board Volunteers:** We are always looking for individuals who would like to step into leadership roles with us. If you may be interested in helping guide our LBC programs, please call the office and let's schedule time to talk!

## Our Office & Office Manager

**New LBC Office:** Hurricane Helene flooded our old office in September 2024 and we lost much of our office equipment and supplies. We are happy to report that we now have a new office location at 460 West Dearborn Street in Englewood.

Office hours are 10 am — 2 pm, Monday, Thursday, and Friday. Please call ahead before visiting as those hours will sometimes vary. The office phone is 941-830-8922.

**Mailing Address:** Please note we are continuing to use our P.O. Box for all mail. Our mailing address is: **P.O. Box 1458, Englewood, FL 34295.**

**New Office Manager:** Carla Clark joined our LBC team in October as our new, part-time office manager. Carla brings valuable experience working in office management and marketing to her new position. You can reach Carla at the phone number above, or by email at [LBCconservancy@comcast.net](mailto:LBCconservancy@comcast.net).





## Protecting Our Burrowing Owl Neighbors

Lemon Bay Conservancy is taking a lead role in a recently launched initiative to help protect a small colony of Florida Burrowing Owls living in a developing area off Gasparilla Road. Our plans include a **\$100,000 fundraising goal** to purchase and maintain properties for permanent Burrowing Owl Habitat Protection!

These charismatic little owls live in underground burrows and hunt insects and rodents in the surrounding grasslands. They are listed by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission as a state-threatened species, primarily due to habitat loss. They lay their eggs underground and welcome the fragile new owlets to the area around their burrows.

Only one small group of Burrowing Owls, with fewer than 50 adults, live in western Charlotte County.

In June 2024, Susy d'Hont, LBC member and birding enthusiast, called together local environmentalists and representatives from Lemon Bay Conservancy, Peace River Audubon, and the Conservancy of North Port, with the goal of creating an action plan to help protect our local owls as the area around them develops. A **set of action plans**, discussed below, developed out of that meeting:



**Map and Monitor the Colony:** We recognized the need to establish a full understanding of the local colony by identifying and monitoring all known burrow locations. To fulfill that objective, a spreadsheet with all known burrow locations was created and, since December 2024, volunteers from LBC and Peace River Audubon have been visiting each location an average of four times a week to record the number of adult owls and owlets present. Over time, this ongoing tracking will allow us to determine nesting success and monitor the health of the colony.

**Clearly Mark Burrow Locations:** Wooden stakes have been placed to establish a 10' perimeter around burrows so that landscapers will avoid driving any heavy equipment over the burrows, which can cause burrow collapse. A wooden t-post has been placed near each burrow entrance to provide a perch for the owls to better observe the surrounding area for potential predators.

**Begin Community Outreach:** In cooperation with Peace River Audubon, an educational brochure about the owls was created and mailed to all local homeowners. The published state regulations for protecting the owls and their burrows were discussed with the property owners' association and with their mowing contractor.



**Connect with Outside Experts:** Susy d'Hont reached out to a statewide Burrowing Owl non-profit, known as Project Perch, for ideas on installing artificial burrows to provide better protected homes for the owls. We have also reached out to government representatives from Charlotte County Natural Resources and Florida Fish & Wildlife to discuss ideas for protecting the colony.

Peace River Audubon President, Bren Curtis, an active member of our team, has studied procedures used by the Audubon Burrowing Owl team on Marco Island and created an information section on Burrowing Owls on the chapter website at: [PeaceRiverAudubonSociety.org/birds-in-peril](https://PeaceRiverAudubonSociety.org/birds-in-peril)

Through Project Perch, we have engaged with researchers from the University of Idaho who are doing genetic testing to better understand both Florida and Western Burrowing Owl populations (which are

— Continued on page 4 —

## *Protecting Our Burrowing Owl Neighbors (Continued)*

different species) and have hosted the researchers to band and take genetic samples from members of our local colony.

**Acquire Lots to Provide Permanent Owl Habitat:** Lemon Bay Conservancy has established a program to acquire selected lots to provide permanent protected habitats for the owls. We have sent letters to long-time lot owners asking them to consider donating their property to the Conservancy and have, so far, received one donated lot through this campaign.

Thanks to very generous donations from a small group of initial financial contributors, as of October 2025, we have purchased four additional lots. We have placed artificial burrows on each of these lots and are excited to report that the owls have already been seen checking out their new “digs”.

Lots in areas near the owls are currently selling in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 range. *Our goal for 2026 is to raise \$100,000 to fund additional property purchases and to provide for ongoing ownership costs.*

### **Want to Learn More or Help Us Out?**

**Learn:** If you'd like to learn more about this exciting project, mark your calendar to join us for our LBC annual meeting on January 22, 2026, where our Burrowing Owl Initiative will be the featured topic. (See page 10 for meeting details.) We also invite you to visit the new Burrowing Owl section on our LBC website at [LemonBayConservancy.org/Burrowing-Owls](https://LemonBayConservancy.org/Burrowing-Owls).

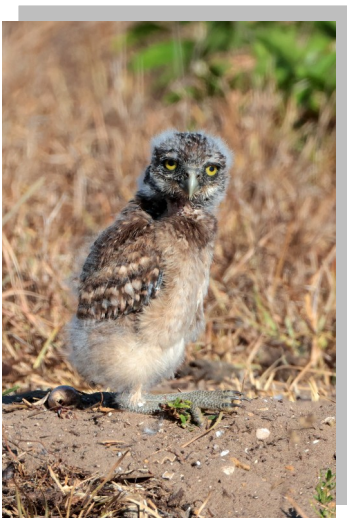
**Volunteer:** We need volunteers to help with burrow monitoring, burrow maintenance, and spreadsheet data entry. We invite you to come out and help our volunteer team! Please send us an email at [info@LemonBayConservancy.org](mailto:info@LemonBayConservancy.org), or call the office, if you'd like to get involved.

**Donate:** If you'd like to make a special donation online to our new Burrowing Owl Habitat Protection Fund, visit [LemonBayConservancy.org/Burrowing-Owls](https://LemonBayConservancy.org/Burrowing-Owls). You can also contribute by completing the special donation section of the form on page 12 in this newsletter, or by calling the LBC office.

**A closing note:** You may remember the 2006 movie *Hoot*, partially filmed on Boca Grande. That movie was about a group of young children trying to protect Burrowing Owl habitat from destruction!

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## *A Few Quick Facts about Our Florida Burrowing Owls:*



*A young owlet, about 3 weeks old*

- Burrowing Owls are 9" tall with a 21" wingspan.
- ◆ They weigh around 5 ounces, about the same weight as a tennis ball or a deck of cards.
- ◆ They have brightly colored eyes and long legs.
- ◆ Their burrows are an average of 5' long, sometimes up to 12', and up to 3' underground.
- ◆ The female lays 1 to 6 eggs and incubates them underground for 4 weeks while the male brings food and keeps watch above.
- ◆ The newly hatched owlets remain underground for an additional 2 weeks before first emerging.
- ◆ The owlets begin trying to fly almost immediately, and can fly well at 6 weeks.
- ◆ The parents continue to feed the owlets for 12 weeks until they are fully independent.
- ◆ Burrowing Owls can't move their eyes. To see in different directions, they can turn their heads 270 degrees.



## Report from Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve

In January, we will celebrate the **5th anniversary** of the reopening of Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve following the major restoration project undertaken by Lemon Bay Conservancy (LBC), the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

First time visitors to the Preserve today marvel at the beauty of the “rewilded” habitats and cannot imagine that the land was once a golf course. The estuarine wetlands, freshwater wetlands, and upland habitats offer wonderful areas to explore and learn about our fragile local ecosystems.



Despite the major damages inflicted by Hurricane Ian in 2022 and Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024, the Preserve has survived and thrived. We hope you'll come out and visit soon!

**Hurricane Milton's Surge Damage:** While Hurricane Ian's major impacts were wind-related, Hurricane Milton's primary destructive force was water. By using FWC's water level loggers, cross-referenced to our surveyed water level gauges, we have calculated that Milton's storm surge rose to 8.2' on the NAVD<sup>1</sup> scale at Moorhen Pond, which is in the central area of the preserve, and that surge waters remained over 5' for thirteen hours before receding. The storm waters overtopped Placida Road and high-salinity water surged through most of the Preserve's 80-acres.

Plantings throughout the preserve that were not tolerant to salt-water immersion were killed or heavily damaged. Species that were badly depleted include Alligator Flag, Blue-flag Iris, Pickerelweed, Water Lily, Cypress, Firebush, and Wild Coffee.

Dana Houkal, LBC volunteer and professional environmental consultant, has monitored salinity levels regularly since the storm. Thanks to the summer rains, excess salinity has been flushed from most of our freshwater wetlands. The primary exception is Hosman Pond. The salinity there was the highest measured after the storm and, while better, it remains high over a year later. Sadly, almost all of the beautiful plantings that surrounded this pond have died. With the cooler weather this winter and the return of our seasonal volunteers, we hope to clear away the damaged plantings and begin placing new, highly salt-tolerant species.



*Ann Weaver and Maura Qualls*

**Replanting in the Preserve Butterfly Habitat** Not long after Milton's storm surge receded, LBC volunteers Ann Weaver and Maura Qualls noted that many of the butterfly nectar and host plants in the Butterfly Habitat failed to return due to the hurricane damage. Soil salinity levels were up, and it was apparent that many native plants were not salt tolerant.

A plan was devised to bring transplants from their home gardens to test whether new plants would survive. Wild Petunia, Black-eyed Susans, Goldenrod, Tropical Salvia and Porterweed were planted and hand watered daily to ensure their survival in hot, dry April and May. The plants did well, and more plants were added, purchased from the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Maura and Ann began to design plantings for the largest habitat area, a thirty-foot diameter circle that had almost no surviving plants. Cardboard was laid to smother grass weeds and gardener's paths were mulched to access this large planting space. In May, the Conservancy

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<sup>1</sup> NAVD, the North American Vertical Datum, is the most commonly used scale for elevation surveys. The typical water elevations in the preserve freshwater ponds range from a low close to 0' NAVD in the dry season to a high over 4' after periods of heavy rain. Most upland areas in the preserve have elevations ranging from 1' to 7' NAVD. Our highest elevation is approximately 16' atop the big preserve hill.

## *Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve Report (Continued)*

purchased 74 native plants to fill this area. Yellow Top, Partridge Pea, Blue-eyed Grass, Pineland Heliotrope, Starry Rosinweed, Tropical Salvia, Coastal Verbena, Calamint, Dotted Horsemint, Lantana, Goldenrod, False Rosemary, Asters, Black-eyed Susans, Teabush, Carolina Jessamine and Blue Sage are adding yellow, white, purple, red and blue blossoms to the garden.

Rainy season was still weeks away and Preserve ponds were still high in salinity, so Maura and Ann brought water from home to help the plants survive. Marti and Jim Krug helped prep the bed, weed and plant. Jack Simmonds placed stakes for shade cloths and edged the bed with cut logs.

Finally, the rains came, greatly helping the new plants. Monarch, Cloudless Sulphur, White Peacock, Giant Swallowtail and Florida White butterflies are visiting the Habitat regularly, enjoying the new nectar plants. If you'd like to visit the Habitat, to volunteer or to ask questions, Maura and Ann are usually there early on Thursday mornings and they are offering a tour of the Habitat at 9:00 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month through May.

**1000 Seedlings Pine Planting:** In June, LBC volunteers planted 1000 containerized South Florida Slash Pine seedlings at the Preserve using a reforestation program sponsored by the Florida Forestry Service. Brad Kort coordinated an enthusiastic group of volunteers from the Rotonda West Woman's Club and Lemon Bay Conservancy in two-hour shifts to plant the trees. Using dibble bars, the volunteers worked in two-person teams in our hot and humid summer conditions. The teams planted 600 pine seedlings on the preserve mound near Placida Road, and 400 seedlings at locations around Duckweed Pond and near the preserve trail east of the Lemon Creek wetlands. Dana Houkal is monitoring survival of the seedlings and so far reports a remarkable 80+% survival rate.

**Eagle Scout Service Project:** In July, Wesley Cantrell, for his Eagle Scout Service Project, led a group of scouts from Troop 26 in building a new information kiosk in the southwestern area of the preserve, near special interest point "T" on our trail map. The kiosk is constructed with pressure treated 6"x 6" posts, stainless steel bolts and a metal roof.

We are using the new kiosk to provide visitors with educational signage about Lemon Creek and our juvenile tarpon research project. Wesley's effort marks the fourth Eagle Scout Service Project completed at Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve!

**New Educational Signage and Videos:** The new signs at the kiosk are two of eleven new educational signs being put in place this fall at the Preserve. The signs, developed by volunteer Eva Furner, are positioned at Special Interest Points shown on the preserve trail map and cover topics including Preserve water flows, mangroves, ephemeral ponds, and the Lemon Creek bridge. Bob Winter is producing new videos for our Lemon Bay Conservancy YouTube channel that cover each topic and can be accessed by QR codes on the signs. The new educational signs and videos join eleven Special Interest Point signs/videos already in place at the Preserve.



*A few of our wonderful volunteers posing for a snapshot after a morning work session at the Preserve*

**Our Amazing Preserve Volunteers:** Beyond the special projects highlighted above, our incredible volunteers work on activities throughout the year to help monitor, maintain, and enhance the Preserve. Ongoing efforts include monthly water quality testing, weekly bird surveys, plant survival surveys, management of the bird feeding area, maintenance of the purple martin gourds, guided nature walks, and the never-ending tasks of trail mowing, clearing vines from plantings, weeding, controlling invasives, and cleaning benches and signs.

Many of our dedicated volunteers return year-after-year. This March, at our annual Preserve volunteer appreciation dinner, we were delighted to recognize 27 active Preserve volunteers who have contributed their time and skills at the Preserve for 5-years or more. Within that group, we recognized 10 volunteers who had previously reached their 10-year volunteer milestone and presented acrylic plaques to 4 volunteers who joined the 10-year group this past season: Joe Gallagher, Don Hamilton, Marj Hamilton, and John McCurley.

For the first time, we recognized volunteers who have



## Preserve Report (Continued)

donated their time and efforts for a remarkable 15 years! That's the entire time LBC has owned the Preserve! The individuals joining this prestigious group are: Bob Cooper, Bill Dunson, Eva Furner, Bob Hildebrand, and Maura Qualls. Each received a custom slate plaque to acknowledge their efforts.

There are always a variety of projects to do at the Preserve. Why not come out and join our volunteer team? Just call the office at 941-830-8922 or send us an email at [info@LemonBayConservancy.org](mailto:info@LemonBayConservancy.org), and we'll get in touch to discuss your interests and our needs!

**New Preserve Manager:** With all the ongoing projects at the Preserve, the LBC board decided this past summer that we should hire a Preserve Manager to coordinate efforts. We are pleased to announce that Chad Lyman has joined our team as our new, part-time Preserve Manager. Chad, who recently obtained his Florida Master Naturalist certification, will be coordinating volunteer efforts on restoration and maintenance projects, scheduling walks and events, ensuring the preserve's equipment is in good working order, managing invasive species treatment programs, monitoring preserve conditions, and implementing repair projects.



Chad will also communicate regularly with the LBC Board of Directors on activities completed, planned projects, and preserve needs. If you would like to reach Chad with preserve questions or ideas, his email is [LemonBay.Chad@gmail.com](mailto:LemonBay.Chad@gmail.com).

## Lemon BayWatch: Water Quality Initiatives

Here are updates on our important Water Quality Initiatives:

**Seagrass:** In the spring of 2025, Lemon Bay Conservancy signed a contract with the University of Florida IFAS and SeaGrant to become the community partner to oversee the spring and summer seagrass monitoring program in Lemon Bay. As a community partner, LBC provides equipment and volunteers, and conducts the program in our locality under the guidelines of UF/IFAS and SeaGrant.



*A boatload of volunteers heading out for seagrass monitoring*

Volunteer David Perry was appointed Lemon Bay Seagrass Coordinator. David and his partner Gregg Banks worked many hours organizing and constructing equipment, scheduling, training volunteers, and collecting each site's results. Many of our sampling sites are not kayaking or wading friendly so David and Greg made several trips with different volunteer groups in their boat to give volunteers that would otherwise be unable to participate in the survey an opportunity to be a part of this important endeavor. Once the data was collected for each site, David and Greg organized and transmitted it to the SeaGrant agent for inclusion in the statewide Seagrass Monitoring Program.

Without David and Greg, this program would not have been successful, and we express our sincerest thanks to both of them. In addition, we wish to warmly thank all the volunteers that jumped into the water, paddled or drove boats, and otherwise assisted in collecting data for this program.

**Eco-Kayak Tours:** Again this past year, Charlie Woodruff, Jayne Dean, and Beth McKinley led LBC kayakers on tours throughout Lemon Bay and along some of its tributaries. They are informative tour guides and willingly share their knowledge and understanding of the environment with attendees. Twice they and others made post-hurricane mangrove and shoreline debris cleanup part of their excursion, resulting in the collection of large and small trash, much of it high-hanging plastic, as well as one

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## ***Lemon BayWatch: Water Quality Initiatives (Continued)***

"distressed" Agatha Bear (a stuffed bunny dressed as a bear). The new hurricane-produced opening on Manasota Key, referred to as Milton's Pass, was a new site explored by kayakers. With Stump Pass State Park closed due to storm damage, this was a great way to see and explore that part of Lemon Bay. Watch our LBC emails for upcoming tour schedules.



*Clearing hurricane debris from the mangroves on a kayak excursion*

**Community Outreach:** We were privileged to be invited to several community events to talk about the amazing things Lemon Bay Conservancy brings to the community. In December, we met and talked with attendees at the Community Resource Fair and at a Christmas event on Dearborn Street, where we were the second biggest attraction after Santa.

April was a busy month! We participated in the Coffee and Conservation series at the Chamber of Commerce where we gave a presentation on clams and oysters and their important role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. We spoke to a couple of homeowners associations to spread the word about what property owners can do to keep the environment healthy, and especially to foster interest in water quality issues. We rounded out the month with a table at the annual Earth Day Celebration hosted by Cedar Point Environmental Park. Along with other area conservation groups and agencies, we promoted our work and especially appealed to attending youth.



*Visitors to the LBC display at Waterfest*

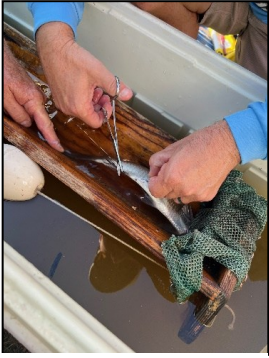
October saw us at the locally popular and well attended Englewood Waterfest. Again this year, LBC was invited to have a table in the Conservation Tent. The Waterfest volunteer team worked for many hours on our exhibit. We debuted our Lucky Ducky Conservation Game where participants spun the wheel and were asked a question related to the category that the wheel stopped on. It was a fun and educational way to interact with attendees, many of whom were not acquainted with LBC and our programs. We also had our water cycle poster and information giving visitors a chance to learn how water cycles through the earth and skies and the importance of conservation and limiting the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

**Clam Research:** On a cold and windy Sunday morning in December 2024, we finalized our clam pilot study. The pilot study was done to determine if the Southern Hardshell Clam (*Mercenaria campechiensis*) could be restored to Lemon Bay. Of our three trial sites, which were established in June 2024, one was completely destroyed by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, and we could not retrieve our gear or find any clams. Another site was partially buried and, while we were able to retrieve our gear, the planted clams did not survive the shifting sands. Our third site was much more successful, having been placed in a more secluded cove. A reasonable number of clams survived, and it was determined that this location would be a good place to start a clam sanctuary. We are beginning work with Dr. Ernesto Lasso de la Vega on permitting for the sanctuary. New research suggests that clams placed in areas with seagrass scars help promote faster seagrass growth. In addition to the sanctuary, we are considering a pilot study to place clams within seagrass scars.

**Vertical Oyster Gardens (VOGs):** VOGs are strands of oyster shells hung from docks in areas where oysters grow naturally. Baby oysters (spat) float around in the water column and eventually attach to any hard surface, including VOGs. An adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day, removing excess nutrients, sediments, and algae. In the months ahead, we will be working to deploy our oyster gardens in the canals on Boca Grande.



## FWC Juvenile Tarpon Research Update: November 2025



Tarpon being acoustically tagged

Juvenile tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*) use coastal marsh ponds, like those found in Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve, as important nursery habitats. Such nurseries provide ample food, room for fish to grow, and allow for movement into the open estuary. However, prior to the restoration of Wildflower Preserve that occurred in 2020, the habitat was found to be suboptimal for supporting tarpon. Fish seemed to be crowded and were not growing to the same sizes as those in natural habitats before leaving the safety of the ponds.

Thanks to a large grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the FWC has tagged nine tarpon with acoustic transmitters to track their movements throughout the preserve. This allows FWC scientists to better assess how the fish are using the restored areas, and to determine if they are successfully leaving the nursery and at what size. Understanding tarpon movements in Wildflower Preserve — in conjunction with abundance and size information

collected by the Lemon Bay Conservancy tarpon net pulls — will help to better understand the life cycle of tarpon and bring awareness to this iconic species.

Acoustic receivers (instruments that listen for tagged fish) were placed throughout the restored preserve ponds in March of 2025. Following the first periodic download of the data collected by the receivers, preliminary analysis showed that three of the nine tagged tarpon successfully exited the preserve through Lemon Creek. The fish ranged in length from 18-29 inches and differed in their use of the ponds as well as the date at which they left the preserve (See figure below).

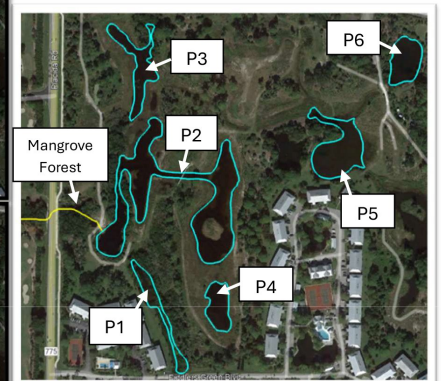
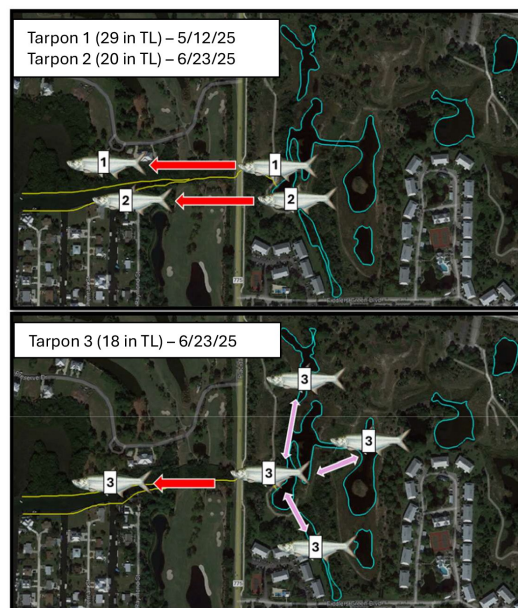
Tarpon 3 was tracked moving back and forth between the Ponds. This information implies that the tarpon are using multiple ponds in the newly created habitat and are far less crowded than they were prior to restoration. Data from the monthly net pulls has shown that tarpon are achieving larger sizes following restoration, implying that this additional space, and presumably adequate food, have improved the condition of the nursery. The emigration of tarpon from the preserve to the open estuary at larger sizes than before gives the tarpon a greater chance of survival over the long run.

In addition to acoustic receivers, data loggers tracking water levels associated with tides, storm surge, and rain or drought events have been placed throughout Wildflower Preserve. The first tarpon emigrated on May 12th, during a king tide. The two other tarpon emigrated at the peak of a high tide on June 23rd. The high water levels allowed the tarpon to swim through a mangrove forest into the estuary.

FWC will continue to monitor the six remaining tagged fish in the preserve for an additional two years. Furthermore, there are large arrays of receivers to the north near Sarasota Bay and to the south in Charlotte Harbor, where we may hear from these fish again and learn more about their travels.

Top and bottom maps show tarpon 1, 2, and 3 movement patterns within Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve. White boxes in the top left indicate the standard lengths corresponding with tarpon 1, 2, and 3 at the time they were tagged, along with their date of emigration into the open estuary. Map on the right depicts the ponds with their corresponding names and the mangrove forest, which connects to the mouth of the estuary traveling under SR 775 into Lemon Bay

**Note:** This article has been abbreviated for the newsletter. View the full article on our website at: [LemonBayConservancy.org/fwc-tarpon-report/](http://LemonBayConservancy.org/fwc-tarpon-report/)



## ***Vision, Growth, & Leadership: Seeking a New Executive Director***

The Conservancy is actively seeking a passionate and visionary **Executive Director**. Hiring this new leader is a substantial, bold undertaking that will immediately elevate our capacity for growth. The Executive Director will be instrumental in helping us develop a future vision and guiding us to the next level of effectiveness. This role will focus on two crucial areas:

**Mission Expansion & Support:** This new leader will be charged with **growing our base of support** to accomplish ambitious growth and enable new projects and ideas. They will spearhead initiatives to restore more threatened ecosystems and secure the resources needed for sustained impact.

**Deep Community Engagement:** The Executive Director will **develop and expand deep connections to the local community** and significantly boost our educational programs, including **inspiring the next generation of students**.

If you know of any candidates to step into this exciting job, please send them the full position description, available at [LemonBayConservancy.org/executive-director](https://LemonBayConservancy.org/executive-director). And, please *give generously today* to help us write this exciting new chapter for Lemon Bay Conservancy!

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## ***Upcoming Guided Walks, Kayak Trips & Special Events***

Each month through April, we are offering **free, public guided nature walks** with our volunteer naturalists at Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve and we are planning **member kayak trips** at various venues around Lemon Bay. To keep up to date on the schedules for all of our upcoming activities, please be sure that the office has your email address to receive our regular LBC information emails. (Please send us a note with your email address if you aren't yet receiving our emails.) You can also see all the upcoming activities on our LBC website calendar at: [LemonBayConservancy.org/calendar](https://LemonBayConservancy.org/calendar).

**Three special event dates** to add to your calendar now:

- **Thursday, January 22, LBC Annual Meeting & Presentation on Burrowing Owl Habitat Protection**, 5:00 pm refreshments, 5:30 short business meeting with presentation following, Location: Cape Haze Community Center, 180 Spyglass Alley, Placida.
- **Saturday, February 14, Exploration Day at Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve**, 8:00 am—1:00 pm. We will celebrate the 5th anniversary of the restored Preserve with a series of nature walks and talks, and information booths hosted by local conservation groups. Watch your LBC emails for more details!
- **Thursday, February 26**, 5:00 pm refreshments, 5:30 presentation. Our popular **Coastal Seminar Series** returns with Dr. Maria Cartolano (UM-Rosenstiel School) speaking about a surprising hero of marine science: **The Gulf Toadfish**. These local fish are key bioindicators, and their health is helping us measure the true cost of human impact—from the Deepwater Horizon spill to the deafening effects of underwater noise pollution on marine mammals. At the Cape Haze Community Center, 180 Spyglass Alley, Placida. Watch our LBC emails for more details.

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## ***Scholarship Awarded***



At the 2025 Lemon Bay High School Senior Scholarship Night in June, LBC President Irene Slattery awarded our annual scholarship to McKenzie DeLong.

This scholarship is awarded to a Senior who demonstrates interest in conservation and the environment, and who plans to pursue a degree in environmental science.

Mckenzie is now in her first semester at the University of South Florida, majoring in Marine Science.



## Options to Help Ensure LBC's Financial Future

Non-profits like Lemon Bay Conservancy operate with a number of funding sources including membership giving and unrestricted donations that cover our yearly operating costs, donations and grants that are to be used for a particular purpose, occasional capital campaigns that allow us to take on bigger things like purchasing properties for conservation, and, finally, our endowment fund. Here are some ways you can help LBC fulfill our mission now and into the future!



### LBC Endowment Fund

Our need for funding is not just about our work today. It's about creating a durable foundation that lasts. You can help us build that foundation by giving something to our endowment fund, a fund that can grow even as we spend a portion of it on mission-critical expenses.

Our endowment fund is managed by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation (GCCF) based in Venice. As the endowment grows through contributions and investments, the fund provides support for LBC's long-term sustainability.

### Other Charitable Giving Ideas

As you plan your year-end charitable donations, and think about options to support Lemon Bay Conservancy, you may want to consider other charitable giving options:

**Property Donations:** In addition to direct monetary giving, consider donating real estate instead. This is particularly relevant for properties that are environmentally sensitive and could be harmed if acquired for development purposes. LBC can also manage the process to have conservation easements placed on donated properties to ensure that development in the future is not possible.

**Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs):** Consider a Qualified Charitable Distribution as

part of your IRA "RMD". If you've reached the age at which you are required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA, a QCD can be a smart strategy for minimizing your taxes and at the same time benefiting Lemon Bay Conservancy (and other charitable organizations). Funds contributed directly from your IRA to qualified non-profit groups via QCD are not considered part of your taxable income for the year, allowing you to avoid paying taxes on that portion of your RMD. Talk with your tax advisor and contact your IRA administrator to make arrangements.

**Donate Appreciated Stock:** Donating appreciated stocks is a great tax-planning tool that can allow you to avoid paying capital gains on the stocks. You may be able to claim a charitable contribution equal to the fair market value of the stocks on the date of donation. Check with your tax advisor to discuss your specific situation.



**Planned giving in wills and trusts:** What would you like to be remembered for? Are there causes or charities you love today that you hope will continue to flourish long after you're gone? A planned gift can benefit whatever it is you care about most and, if you wish, let future generations know it mattered to you. By planning a bequest through your will or trust, you can establish a way to support Lemon Bay Conservancy in the future.

We will work with you to ensure that your gift will accomplish your personal charitable wishes, and then we will carefully steward it to achieve those goals for the future.

For more details about how you can give above-and-beyond to the endowment fund, specifying our endowment fund in your will or estate plan, making distributions from your IRA, or donating stock, contact Diane Coll, our Treasurer, at 603-702-0730 or by email at [diane@dianecoll.com](mailto:diane@dianecoll.com).



P.O. Box 1458  
Englewood, FL 34295

## Lemon Bay Conservancy Contributions:

To contribute online go to [LemonBayConservancy.org](http://LemonBayConservancy.org). To mail-in your membership and/or donation, please follow the steps below.

*Step 1: Cut off this entire page from the newsletter to use as your mail-in form.*

*Step 2: Use the space above to write-in or update your name and mailing address.*

*Step 3: Complete the information below for your membership and/or donation.*

*Step 4: Mail your completed form to LBC using the address at the top left corner of this page. (New P.O. box!)*

### My Membership Contribution:

☐ New Member ☐ Membership Renewal

☐ \$35 Individual ☐ \$50 Household / Supporting ☐ \$100 Patron ☐ \$250 Benefactor

☐ \$500 Conservator ☐ \$750 Trustee of the Land ☐ \$1,000 Keeper of the Land

☐ \$2,500 Guardian of the Land ☐ \$5,000 Steward of the Land

**My Special Donation:** \$\_\_\_\_\_ Apply to: ☐ General fund ☐ Burrowing Owls ☐ LBC Endowment

**Form of Payment:** ☐ Credit Card ☐ Check (Please make payable to Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc.)

Credit Card Information: ☐ Visa ☐ Master Card Security code: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information:** Please add your information below. We'll only use this information for LBC purposes.

My Email:	
My Telephone:	