

A YEAR OF
conservation
2022

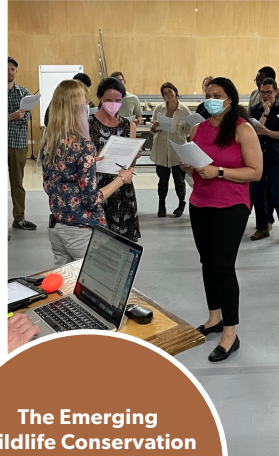
The goal of White Oak Conservation is to engage diverse communities within our network to nurture and train conservation leaders. In 2022 we hosted students, classes, conservation conferences, and organizations here at White Oak, as well as supported White Oak team members who traveled internationally to help with projects for endangered species in their natural ranges. This report is dedicated to the critical outreach, classes, and training we accomplished, both locally and abroad.



The Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders (EWCL)

brings together twenty new emerging leaders in the wildlife conservation field for capacity-building and intense training in campaign development and skills, including implementation of a two-year group international wildlife issue campaign. Working in small teams, participants explore critical threats to a selected species; identify ways they can contribute to its conservation over the two-year training; design, implement and evaluate an international campaign.

White Oak has hosted EWCL since it began in 2004, providing a space where new classes and returning ones can meet, strategize and evaluate their projects. The White Oak team plays a lead role in coordinating the EWCL program and serves as a resource to the participating students as they develop their campaigns. Providing groups like EWCL and other conservation organizations a place to gather and focus on solutions to challenges facing the environment is an important aspect of White Oak's greater contribution to the conservation of wildlife and wild places.



The Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders Class IX convened at White Oak in May.

"93% of EWCL participants and alumni polled agree that EWCL helps them develop the ability to be a more effective conservation professional."



Pre-veterinary undergraduate students

Al'asia Jenkins (left) from Delaware State University, and Kynia McNeal (right) from Tuskegee University, spent four weeks shadowing our veterinary team this past summer. They watched procedures and made new friends!

Both students were part of an outreach program through the Jacksonville-based Annie Ruth Foundation.



Interns Lauren Hayes (left) and Taylor Horton (right) joined the wildlife team after successfully completing their internships.



Internships at White Oak inspire the next generation of conservationists.

People are vital to the success of conservation, whether through implementing conservation programs, supporting and engaging local communities, or ensuring healthy wildlife populations. Accordingly, creating and supporting training and educational opportunities for students and professionals is one of White Oak's highest priorities. Thirty-one interns participated in the 2022 training programs at White Oak. Many of our students have gone on to work in the conservation field. Some of our past interns now play a critical role working as members of the teams here at White Oak!



"There are a few things that inspired me to get into the wildlife field. One major reason: I wanted to work towards something, a greater change."

-Chris Isaac, elephant care specialist and past intern

White Oak has a long-standing history of educating early career professionals.

However, in recent years we have expanded our education programs to engage a younger audience in the conservation work taking place across the property. From understanding the basics of animal behavior to the challenges threatening endangered wildlife, White Oak embraces the effort to build ecological awareness, scientific literacy, and conservation ethic in the younger generations.



In 2022, White Oak hosted 745 students through our local partner school programs and had 131 youths attend our Conservation Summer Camps. We have dedicated outreach program resources to educate and inspire the next generation of conservationists and stewards of the natural world. Here's to their success!



"I have learned so much about conservation, I love the animals and their individual personalities and abilities, and I love being out in nature. I have also made wonderful friendships, and learned a great deal about myself." **- Summer Camp attendee**



White Oak Conservation is widely respected for our work at home and abroad.

For example, this past summer, White Oak veterinarians Dr. Scott Citino and Dr. Emily Brenner traveled to South Africa to evaluate a new anesthesia protocol in free-ranging impala. While there, they helped with other game captures, worked on cattle, and assisted with dehorning white rhinos.

Dr. Citino and Dr. Brenner also helped with a course for wildlife veterinarians working with orphaned rhino babies to teach advanced techniques such as anesthesia, intubation, endoscopy, and several other procedures. When not working and sharing their skills, they were able to relax and visit Kruger National Park and other protected areas in the Republic of South Africa.



In March, Dr. Citino traveled to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park in Indonesia to oversee and assist local veterinarians with the birth of an endangered Sumatran rhino calf. It was the mother's first calf, and we are happy to report it's a girl and both are doing well! The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary project is managed and supported by our partner in rhino conservation, the International Rhino Foundation.



The Avian Team celebrated the 500th sparrow release into the wild earlier this year. Left to right, Megan Stair and Alex Pearcy (sparrow interns), Zara Bittner, Riley Parrott, Andrew Schumann, and Becca Garlinger (White Oak), Juan Oteyza, Ph.D (Florida FWC).



Florida grasshopper sparrow in the wild, by Augustus (Gus) Forrest



In order to increase genetic diversity in both sparrow populations, Rebecca Garlinger (left) and Zara Bittner (right) swap sparrow eggs from White Oak with a nest in the wild.



They say it takes a village to make a difference. That's certainly the case with a tiny bird that has been at the center of a multi-organizational project for the last six years. The Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*) is a critically endangered species of bird found in dry prairie habitats of south/central Florida. First described in 1902, by 2017 there were approximately 15 breeding pairs left in the wild due to habitat degradation and loss.

In 2016, White Oak began working on a recovery program in partnership with experts from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. White Oak's Avian Team (above, left) took on the daunting task of breeding for recovery a small remnant population of Florida grasshopper sparrows. That same year, sparrows were brought in from the wild and housed in predator resistant structures, and in 2019, the first sparrows were released into the wild. To date, 666 birds have been introduced into the wild from White Oak and two other facilities that have joined the effort to conserve this endangered species.

Although the Florida grasshopper sparrow is far from reaching its original numbers, this collaborative project gives hope to the future of the tiny bird, thanks to the village.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the nonprofit Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida via proceeds from the 'Conserve Wildlife' license plate. For more information, please visit wildlife florida.org.



Foto: Biro Hunta KPHK

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