



2020 Annual Year in Review Report

Well 2020 has been quite a year! Thanks to YOU, we have conducted invaluable scientific research, worked unflinchingly to save multiple imperiled species, adhered steadfastly to ecological management of 250 prime Coastal Plain acres, and passionately facilitated natural history learning with countless citizens, families, and children...even during a pandemic! It's been an interesting year to say the least and but 2021 is just around the corner and we very much look forward to interacting with you more in the coming year!

Nature for Newts Outdoor Challenge

We've all been stuck inside too much this year and could use a challenge to disconnect from Zoom and reconnect to nature. So we've created the Nature for Newts outdoor challenge to encourage people to get outside for at least 30 minutes every day while raising money to support the striped newt repatriation project in 2021.

How you can get involved:

- Just go to our website and click on Nature for Newts. Once there you can purchase your ticket to start the challenge. Your name will be listed as a participant once you sign-up.
- Start your 30-day challenge at any time. Encourage your friends and family to sign up and join you in your challenge, too (details on our website).
- Tag us @coastalplainsinstitute in your social media posts and use #naturefornewts. We'll be posting our own pictures as well as fun ideas for spending your thirty minutes! You can also email us your pics and we'll post them on our website gallery.
- Better yet, set up your own personal Fundraising page. Most of the work has already been done for you, you can just add your own personal touch like your photo and edit the words to personalize then ask your friends, family, and networks to support you in your efforts by making a donation and joining you in your challenge (details on our website).





Research

Our research in 2020 focused primarily on our ongoing efforts to save the highly imperiled striped newt in the Apalachicola National Forest and continued monitoring of amphibian populations of ephemeral wetlands in the precious longleaf pine sandhill community surrounding the newt study area.

This year was the Striped Newt Repatriation Project's 8th year of releases and we released 673 captive-raised adult and larval striped newts. That makes this year's total the second most releases made in a single year in project history! In February, before pandemic, we were able to host a wildly successful newt release event which took place over several days. We marked and released 322 adult newts. Following CDC and local government guidelines, we opted to not mark the rest of our released newts later in the year once the pandemic was underway to keep everyone safe.



An extreme bout of dryness in the spring and early summer was severe enough to dry two out of three of our rubber lined newt ponds. However, at one pond, the rubber liner held water through the drought, and we observed striped newt larvae present three months past adult release. This confirms that released adults did breed when given the opportunity. Reproduction within repatriated populations is one very important metric of success. We will likely see more of this year's release cohorts either as recaptures or returners in subsequent years. With much work left to do, we inch ever closer to project success, and continue to need support from all sources, particularly you.

In 2021 we will be welcoming onboard the Atlanta Botanical Gardens as a captive-breeding facility for our striped newt repatriation efforts. This brings the total number of captive colony partners to five. We continue to work with our partners at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Orianna Center for Indigo Conservation at the Central Florida Zoo, Detroit Zoo, and Amphibian Foundation.



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GARDEN



Education

We focused on several educational programs in 2020: What Lives in the Wetland, Adopt an Ephemeral Wetland, Meet the Scientist, Coastal Plains Adventures. The first three programs are offered free to the public thanks to a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund, the Felburn Foundation, and donations from our members!

Meet the Scientist



In response to the pandemic, we created this new program so we could continue to engage public school students. We work directly with teachers to identify educational standards or specific topics to focus on, create a video to be shown in the classroom, then Zoom in for a Q & A with students. It is an honor to be able to reach students in such a meaningful and engaging way!

Adopt an Ephemeral Wetland

This program continues to be an excellent way to engage the public in wetland ecology and conservation and collect essential data on amphibian populations. We took a break from our monthly Dipnetting Days over the spring and summer but made some adjustments and have now figured out a way to safely host these events!



What Lives in the Wetland

It was a little slow this year but we managed to bring 110 folks out to learn about rare species conservation, longleaf pine ecology, scientific research, and much more! We also provided virtual field trips and went 'live' on Facebook to provide drift fence experiences. And we added new partnerships with the University of Northern Ohio and Florida State University's Environmental Science Capstone Class.



Coastal Plains Adventures

Meet Vanta! In late January, we drove to Atlanta to purchase a used 12-passenger van so we could provide our Big Bend Biodiversity Tours and shuttle people for our Secrets of the River Tours. Great timing, right?!? This was the last step in really getting our Coastal Plains and we're sure 2021 will be the year of Vanta! We look forward to seeing you on a tour soon.





Rowlett's Creek Preserve

Rowlett's Creek Preserve is an 80-acre in-holding in the Apalachicola National Forest that we are restoring from a slash pine plantation back to a native longleaf pine forest. We ran an extensive burn through the property in 2019 so took 2020 off from prescribed fire. If you remember, we lost a lot of trees due to Hurricane Michael but the flip side is that our grass stage longleaf pines seem to be responding to the more open canopy. We are excited to see a lot of 'bottle brush' stage pines popping up. We hope to get you out to the preserve this coming fall for an Open House.



Crown Pointe Preserve



Crown Pointe Preserve consists of 175 acres of pine flatwoods harboring one of the largest patches of the endangered white-topped pitcher plant preserved on private property. We have been unable to visit the property since Hurricane Sally made landfall, but hope to make the trip over to the Perdido Bay area this spring.



Other Updates and Events



DEEP Brewing Company

We partnered with DEEP Brewing Company for the month of February. They chose us as their monthly mission to support our efforts to engage children in conservation. We spent the first Saturday of February at the brewery (it's a hard job but someone had to do it) and had great conversations with customers. Thanks DEEP! If you're thirsty for a local, craft beer, drop by DEEP and tell them CPI sent you.



Monthly Newsletters

We are working towards putting out monthly newsletters (see Interns section!). Make sure you are signed up on our emailing list to receive our monthly updates. To sign up, simply scroll to the bottom of our website and fill out the form.

Future Events

- January 24th – Dipnetting Day
- February – Training for the Stiped Newt Repatriation Team begins
- March – Spring wildflower walks begin

Fire Festival



The only festival we participated in this year (for obvious reasons) was the Fire Festival at Tall Timbers Research Station. There was a fantastic turnout this year!

Interns

We have several interns now helping us with everything from field guides to social media to field work. We partnered with FSU's SOAR program to provide education/outreach projects for students and in return, the SOAR program provides our interns with a stipend. Win, win! Ashlyn, pictured at right, is a SOAR intern that has been creating infographics to help us display our research results in fun and interesting ways. This spring we will be welcoming William as a 20-hour per week intern, part of FSU's 6-credit hour internship course.



Open House

Stay tuned, we are hoping to have an Open House this fall! The one we had in Spring 2019 was so much fun and we look forward to welcoming everyone out to our Rowlett's Creek Preserve again soon.

Our Mission is to stimulate appreciation for nature through environmental education, generate new knowledge about the values of nature through scientific research, and help conserve the native biota of the southeastern U. S. and elsewhere through land ownership and habitat stewardship.

CPI operates entirely through grants, contracts, and contributions from individuals who believe in what we do. We are very proud of all that we have accomplished on a very small annual budget and believe that absolutely no other environmental organization can match our cost/benefit ratio of income to productivity. On our website, we list the published results of our work and educational videos. Check them out and see if you agree. Please help us accomplish even more by spreading the word about our organization, providing an additional donation, volunteering, or choosing us while shopping on Amazon.

More Ways to Donate

On our main giving page you now have the option to donate monthly! Your monthly donation will automatically be withdrawn from your bank account so it's a convenient way to support conservation. You can also donate on a one-time basis, of course. If you are more comfortable renewing your membership by check, you may mail your check (made out to Coastal Plains Institute) to the address listed below. Members receive first notifications about tours, classes, and other events!

Volunteer

Whether it's checking a drift fence, adopting a wetland, or helping on field trips, there are many opportunities to get involved! Contact Rebecca if you are interested.



You can support our efforts while shopping on Amazon at no extra cost to you! Just go to smile.amazon.com and select Coastal Plains Institute as your chosen charity. Every time you shop at smile.amazon.com, a percentage of every qualifying purchase will go to support conservation and education!

Organizational Info

President: Ryan Means

Director: Rebecca Means

Board of Trustees: Ryan Means, Wilson Baker, Tom Ostertag

Mailing Address: 46 Kinsey Road, Crawfordville FL 32327

Phone: (850) 925-1622

Email Contact Info

General: info@coastalplains.org

Ryan: Ryan@coastalplains.org

Rebecca: Rebecca@coastalplains.org

Social Media

Facebook ([coastalplainsinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/coastalplainsinstitute))

Instagram ([coastalplainsinstitute](https://www.instagram.com/coastalplainsinstitute))

YouTube ([Coastal Plains Institute](https://www.youtube.com/CoastalPlainsInstitute))