



Meredith Heather

ARCHBOLD APRIL 2021 NEWS for curious minds



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Caracaras Need Ranchlands



Dustin Angell



Allen McPherson

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Dr. Joan Morrison holding a banded Crested Caracara with transmitter before release.

When Dr. Joan Morrison first arrived at Buck Island Ranch as a University of Florida graduate student to study Crested Caracaras, who knew she would still be coming to the ranch three decades later to study these intelligent birds of prey with orange faces, yellow legs, and jaunty black caps. One of Morrison's initial findings was that Caracaras thrive on improved pasture habitats. She shared, "**Caracaras get along well with cattle and all the activities associated with managing a ranch like burning, mowing and, of course, cattle grazing.**" These pastures are being converted for other uses like urban developments and more intensive agriculture like sugarcane. The Crested Caracara population in Florida is listed as Federally Threatened due to habitat loss. Buck Island Ranch has at least six pairs of nesting Caracaras. Morrison returned to Florida this past January to continue her research in collaboration with the South Florida Water Management District. She explained, "The purpose of this research is to band the birds and fit them with solar-powered transmitters. These transmitters collect location data revealing where they feed during the day and roost at night. **Because I can track them via the Internet, I can begin to understand how Caracaras respond to ongoing regional land use changes.**" Morrison presented her Caracara research for a recent virtual event with Archbold and the East Foundation in Texas. Watch [here](#).

The TODAY Show at Archbold

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"Archbold Biological Station is one of America's iconic centers of continuous research and education in field biology. It is a prototype of what we need all across America."
— Edward O. Wilson





Kerry Sanders, Dr. John Fitzpatrick, and Dr. Hilary Swain on the TODAY show. Note: Everybody maintained safe social distance and wore masks while off camera.

On March 29, NBC Today Show's Kerry Sanders broadcasted live from Archbold Biological Station.

Joined by Archbold Board member Dr. John Fitzpatrick and Executive Director Dr. Hilary Swain, Sanders checked in live with Savannah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb Monday morning to cover the weekend's 'March Madness', then later spent the day filming a piece that will air on The Today Show mid-April (likely April 12-stay tuned). **Sanders was on a mission to observe the charismatic Florida Scrub-Jay at Archbold.** One friendly bird took quite a liking to Kerry as the reporter learned how scientists have been studying the scrub-jay population at Archbold for over 50 years. Kerry learned how jays are dependent on low and open scrub habitat and are the only species of bird found only in Florida. The story will highlight how the Florida Scrub-Jay's threatened status means we must work hard to protect and preserve habitats like the Florida scrub that support this iconic species, and so many others. Habitat loss is the primary threat to Florida Scrub-Jays together with habitat fragmentation. The loss of intervening scrub habitat that once provided connectivity is leaving jay subpopulations isolated and living on disconnected 'islands' of scrub. Florida Scrub-Jays, and other wildlife dependent on the Florida scrub, require connectivity among public and private conservation lands. **Be sure to watch Kerry Sanders on [Today with John Fitzpatrick](#) and Hilary Swain this April!** Follow Archbold's social media ([Facebook](#)/[Instagram](#)/[Twitter](#)) for more details. And remember, help protect the future

Rare Scrub Plant Spotlight

Lewton's Milkwort (*Polygala lewtonii*) is endemic to Florida and blooms in March and April. Photo by Archbold Plant Ecology Research Assistant Stephanie Koontz.

of wild Florida by protecting wildlife corridors: networks of functionally connected lands and waters.

Studying the Northern Everglades



Steffan Pierre in the northern Everglades.

Steffan Pierre first visited Buck Island Ranch back in November 2013. At that time, non-native Island Apple Snails (*Pomacea maculata*) were just expanding their range into the northern Everglades. **Pierre capitalized on the unique opportunity to study the snail colonization for his University of Central Florida Master's research.** Read more on his fascinating findings [here](#). In 2016, Archbold hired Pierre to oversee the monitoring of the NEPES (Northern Everglades Payment for Ecosystem Services) Dispersed Water Management projects. The Ranch became his workplace and home for the next five years. He shared, "I was responsible for the operation, maintenance, data collection, construction, and programming of 20+ hydrological monitoring stations spread across the northern Everglades. Prior to working at the Ranch, I did not understand Florida to be cattle country. Considering that ranching originated in Florida, that's kind of sad. Now, I understand ranchers to be among the premier land custodians of Florida. Being part of the Archbold community over the years, I was able to hone my adaptability and interdisciplinary skillset. **I would not be who I am, or where I am, without my time at Archbold.**" In January 2021, Pierre began his new

Online Events

April 6, April 13, April 20: 9:30 AM

Florida Nature Walks with Mr. Dustin

Join Dustin Angell, Archbold's Director of Education, on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 AM EST as he live-streams from the outdoors in sunny Florida using a selfie-stick and smartphone.

[Register here](#)

Watch all past virtual events [here](#).

job as Environmental Analyst with the South Florida Water Management District in Orlando. He offers these words of wisdom for those who follow in his footsteps: "Quiet observation before action is often best. But when entering a wetland, make noise. Don't sneak up on sleeping feral hogs!"

The Virtual Field Update



Locations of field stations that contributed content to The Virtual Field website.

Archbold's Director of Education, Dustin Angell, was a panelist at the annual meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists in late March. Dustin presented the e-learning initiatives at Archbold and other field stations across North America. He highlighted [The Virtual Field](#) which is a multi-site collaboration involving members of the Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS). **The Virtual Field received**

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funding in 2020 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to provide support and technology for field stations learning to go virtual in response to COVID-19.

The website states, "The Virtual Field creates and shares virtual teaching materials and events from field stations, marine laboratories and other research or educational sites around the world. Collaborative virtual projects teach field skills, such as observation, communication, and critical thinking. Associated instructional materials are designed for university faculty and are being adapted for students of all ages and disciplines." In less than a year, The Virtual Field's website launched with 115 web collaborators and 20 Ecosystem Exploration videos. The group also organized five multi-site e-learning events. The Virtual Field leadership team includes Archbold's Executive Director, Dr. Hilary Swain. They are pursuing funding and partnerships to continue the project's momentum including two further grant applications. The Virtual Field is also proving very useful to guide virtual outreach for audiences beyond college classes including K-12 schools, informal education, and public outreach.



[Archbold Facebook Event Calendar](#)

Conservation Cartographer

The Scrub Blog

Nature and Science from Florida's
Heartland



Watercolor map of Florida's surface water basins created by Angeline Meeks.

Last month, Archbold welcomed Angeline Meeks to fill a newly created Conservation Cartographer position. Thanks to the support of a generous donor, we created this position to enhance our GIS and Data Management program using maps to tell conservation stories and to support our many conservation partners. Last Summer, Archbold began working on our new strategic plan using StratOp, a facilitated process that guides and aligns our team and resources around what matters, moving Archbold towards a strategic vision with an action plan to accelerate impact. Our planning has prioritized the need to apply our scientific research into more conservation action. Combined with re-establishing our predator-prey research program and hiring a communications coordinator, our new conservation cartographer is informing conservation decisions and actions across the state and helping us engage more directly with the public and our conservation partners. Support from donors helps Archbold achieve our mission to build and share the scientific knowledge needed to protect the life, lands, and waters of the heart of Florida and beyond. Your

Explore [The Scrub Blog](#) by Archbold creative staff.

Directions to Archbold Biological Station

Eight miles south of Lake Placid. Entrance is 1.8 miles south of SR 70 on Old SR 8.



[support](#) directly helps us share what we learn with the public. **Angeline's beautiful and carefully crafted maps help us show areas of conservation importance that are integral to #keepFLwild.** We are excited to welcome Angeline to the Archbold family and looking forward to sharing many of her maps in the future.

If you enjoy these stories from Archbold, please consider a gift to support our research and education programs. [Donate now](#). Your gift really makes a difference.

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