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## Happy Birthday Richard Archbold

Special to the Highlands News-Sun Provided by Archbold Biological Station  
Apr 13, 2022



Richard Archbold aboard the Guba.  
COURTESY/ARCHBOLD BIOLOGICAL STATION

Richard Archbold (April 9, 1907-Aug. 1, 1976), founder



renowned conservationist, philanthropist, aviator, and scientific explorer, would have turned 115 this past Saturday. He spent his life travelling to new uncharted regions, learning about previously unknown plants and animals, and using his resources to further understanding about the natural world. As a young man, Richard participated in a scientific expedition to Madagascar and then led three long expeditions to New Guinea during the 1930's. With the onset of WWII in 1939, Archbold had to put his explorations on hold. As a result, he began a search for an area in the USA that could be his scientific base of operations. This search eventually led him to Highlands County, where he established Archbold Biological Station in 1941.

Richard Archbold remained at Archbold Biological Station as its full-time resident, and very active leader, for the next 35 years. Throughout the years, he built a tradition of scientific excellence, inviting scientists from around the world to visit, and sponsored seven more expeditions to the South Pacific. Archbold also invested in conservation and stewardship. Beginning in 1967, the Station started mapping fires systematically and the scientific data began to reveal that fire is vital for scrub species and crucial to the stewardship of the land. In 1973, Archbold purchased 2,773 acres of adjacent land, adding important scrub habitat. During the time that he lived in Florida [1941-1976] he was also active locally. He was a founding or participating member of a variety of Highlands County and Lake Placid Civic Associations. He spent time and money on firefighting equipment and crews which were used to fight many local fires. In Mr. Archbold's lifetime he was known in Highlands County for many of these initiatives but, if you asked an old-timer about "the man on Red Hill," there is one community achievement in particular that they would probably mention first and foremost. It is very likely that they would know him as one of the men who helped bring electricity to their homes.

When Archbold first moved to Highlands County in 1941, most of the area did not yet have

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access to electricity. He made rural electrification a top priority. In his mind it was crucial that all families in the area had access to safe, affordable, reliable electricity. Though the mechanism to start a rural electric cooperative had existed since the 1930's Highlands County residents had not had any luck working with the Federal government to create one. It was no secret in the community how Mr. Archbold felt on the subject and according to Ralph V. Wadlow the first secretary-treasurer of Glades Electric Cooperative, "local people went to Archbold for help and he responded by prodding the federal government into providing the needed assistance to form the Glades Electrical Cooperative." Creation of the Cooperative began in earnest in 1944. and according to Archbold Emeritus Librarian Fred Lohrer, "Richard Archbold was a leader in this effort and one of the founding directors. In the early days of the Cooperative, he personally traveled through Highlands and Glades counties signing-up residents for membership." He received the "30-year Director Service award" on December 4, 1975 for service in the "Florida Rural Electric Cooperative: Director, 1945-1975." He was the very first Vice-President as well and served as either President or Vice-President of the Cooperative until his death.

In the spring of 1976, while hospitalized in Palm Beach County facing terminal cancer, Archbold typed a new will that transferred the land, buildings and his personal fortune to support Archbold Biological Station. His sister, Frances Archbold Hufty, agreed to serve as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Archbold Expeditions. Guided by the Archbold family and all the past and present members of the board of directors, the organization continues Archbold's legacy and traditions. Since founding, Archbold has achieved formidable growth thanks to increasing public support of its important programs – helping to build and share the scientific knowledge needed to protect Florida and beyond. Cheers to Richard Archbold!

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