



The Institute for Regional Conservation

October/2015

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Dear Supporter,

October has been a very busy month for the Institute for Regional Conservation! Here is a quick overview of what we've been up to so far this fall. As always, thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Cara Abbott

Education and Outreach Coordinator
The Institute for Regional Conservation

IRC Happenings

The **Applied Conservation Science** program has been busy surveying the Delray Dunes as part of a project for the City of Delray Beach. The surveys are being conducted in order to determine exactly what floristic and faunistic species are currently living the restored dune habitat. The final data will be submitted to the City and used as a great example to other local cities on what levels of biodiversity can be maintained on city land. IRC is honored to be based out of a city that makes conservation and biodiversity such a priority.



Above: IRC's Chief Executive Officer, Craig van der Heiden, surveying birds of the Delray Dunes.

On the west coast of Florida, IRC's Senior Biologist, Mike Barry, is continuing work at the Picayune Strand State Forest. Barry's work involves tracking vegetation shifts and the effects of sea level rise on the Gulf Coast.

Craig and Sandy Koi, our newest Research Associate, are continuing to survey butterflies at Homestead Air Reserve Base and in Delray Beach.



Above: A Giant Swallowtail found during a survey at Homestead Air Reserve Base.

The **Ecological Restoration Management** program is making a difference on both private and public lands in the Florida Keys, Broward County and at Hobe Sound. IRC staff are working to fulfill the requirements of Partners Grants in the Florida Keys where field biologist, Adriana Olavarria, is engaging with private landowners to remove problematic invasive/exotic species and plant native species. Olavarria also ran a workday at the Boy Scout Camp in West Summerland Key to remove exotics and teach volunteers how to identify exotic seedlings.

At Hobe Sound Natural Wildlife Refuge, IRC has started on another invasive species management project that involves targeting over twenty invasive species found within 103 acres of the property. In Broward, IRC staff began invasive plant management targeting the vine commonly known as spurgecreeper (*Dalechampia scandens*). This invasive is unique because it has only recently become naturalized and was first observed in Broward County in 2005.



Above: Photos of *Dalechampia scandens* on site.

The **Regional Conservation Modeling** program is continuing to prepare the Plants of Puerto Rico floristic database that will launch in December. IRC has also been updating our other databases including Natives For Your Neighborhood and the Floristic Inventory of South Florida. A new search system was added to these sites so that you can now type in only part of a species common name or scientific name to generate a list of possible species. IRC has also added SustainScape, Inc. as a new partner to our Natives For Your Neighborhood page. You can find their information on our sponsorship page [here](#).

IRC's Chief Conservation Strategist, George Gann, just returned from Beijing, China where he participated in the 1st World Forum on Ecosystem Governance. Gann was one of about 150 top conservation biologists from around the world to be a part of this event hosted by the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and the Chinese State Forestry Administration. This is a very exciting time for IRC! For more information on the forum, click [here](#) and stay tuned as we will post more details on our website and next newsletter.

The **Education and Outreach** program is developing a variety of upcoming volunteer opportunities. Recently, Cara Abbott participated in a Green Education Fair held at the Air Base K-8 Center in Homestead, Florida. At the event, Abbott promoted IRC and discussed how to use Natives For Your Neighborhood with students and parents.



Above: Cara Abbott representing IRC at the Green Education Fair at Air Base K-8 Center.

IRC in the News

IRC Plays Key Role in "Endangered" Listing of the Florida bristle fern. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is listing the Florida bristle fern (*Trichomanes punctatum* subsp. *floridanum*) as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act. The fern has been a candidate for federal listing as endangered since November 2009. The official announcement was published in the Federal Register on October 6, 2015 and can be accessed on the species profile page [here](#).



Above: Spores of the Florida bristle fern (*Trichomanes punctatum* subsp. *floridanum*). Photo Credit: James Johnson.

IRC's Craig van der Heiden and George Gann have played a critical role in providing the ranking materials including the historic distribution and specific habitat requirements that contributed to this listing. In the Final Ruling released by FWS, IRC's work is acknowledged and Craig van der Heiden's reports are repeatedly referenced and cited throughout. IRC has spent more than a decade looking for this endemic fern in Everglades National Park and more recently in the Withaloochoochee State Forest. For additional pictures and information on the Florida bristle fern, check out the plant page in our FISF website [here](#).



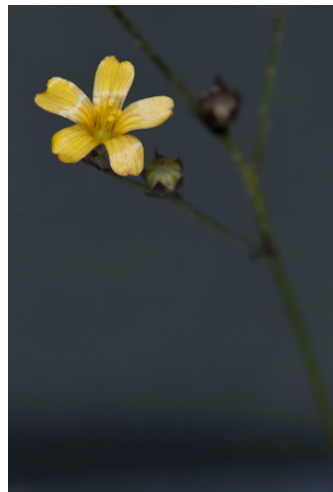
Above: IRC's CEO, Craig van der Heiden, working with the Florida bristle fern (*Trichomanes punctatum* subsp. *floridanum*). Photo Credit: James Johnson.

IRC's Natives For Your Neighborhood Featured in Local Newspapers. In October alone, IRC's free online tool, Natives For Your Neighborhood, was featured as a story in the Delray Forum, Boynton Beach Forum, Community Forum, and Coastal Star. We are honored to have received this level of coverage and are hopeful that the articles inspired some of our South Florida natives to begin making native planting a priority.



Above: A portion of the news article featuring Natives For Your Neighborhood in the Coastal Star.

IRC Contributes to Proposed Listing of Four South Florida Plants. The Big Pine partridge pea (*Chamaecrista lineata keyensis*), wedge spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea serpyllum*) and sand flax (*Linum arenicola*) are being proposed for endangered status while Blodgett's silverbush (*Argythamnia blodgettii*) is being proposed for threatened status. IRC has previously worked with all of these plants and has spent extensive time with the sand flax in particular. Critical habitat designations are being considered for each of these plants, and will be proposed later.



Top Left: [Big Pine partridge pea](#) (*Chamaecrista lineata keyensis*).
 Top Right: [Wedge spurge](#) (*Chamaesyce deltoidea serpyllum*)
 Bottom Left: [Sand flax](#) (*Linum arenicola*)
 Bottom Right: [Blodgett's silverbush](#) (*Argythamnia blodgettii*)

IRC Participates in Global Study That Finds 1/3 of Cacti to be Threatened. George Gann was among the team of scientists that participated in an IUCN-led global Cactaceae assessment. The results of this assessment were published in the prestigious journal, *Nature Plants*, earlier this month. The study found that cacti are the 5th most threatened group of organisms assessed to date, following cycads, amphibians, conifers and warm-water reef building corals, with 31% of the Cactaceae threatened with global extinction. Threats include illegal collecting for the horticulture trade, land conversion for agriculture and residential development, and mining. In the Florida Keys, endemic cacti *Opuntia abjecta* and *Opuntia ochrocentra* are also threatened by rising sea levels.



Left: [Jumping cactus](#) (*Opuntia abjecta*)

Right: [Bullsuckers](#) (*Opuntia ochrocentra*)

The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation targets call for a conservation assessment of all of the world's plants by 2020, which the global cactus assessment shows is feasible. IRC intends to continue playing a role in this key world conservation effort.

Upcoming Events

- Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Ramble -- November 13-15, 2015
- Volunteer Delray -- 5:00 -7:00 pm Friday, November 20, 2015 at Delray Beach Center for the Arts Old School Square Pavilion
- Exotic Species Workshop in Key West -- 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturday, December 5, 2015 at Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden

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