Wildlife Diversity on the DeLuca Preserve
by Dr. Hance Ellington, Assistant Professor

The DeLuca Preserve is a living laboratory where UF/IFAS researchers and our partners can conduct research to better understand Florida’s rangelands. The DeLuca Preserve, near Yeehaw Junction in Osceola County, has a wide variety of landscapes including pastures, wet and dry prairie, citrus, oak hammocks and pine stands, and wetlands. The Rangeland Wildlife Ecology Lab is conducting several research projects at the DeLuca Preserve, many of which are anchored by the Florida Wildlife Corridor Observatory project. The Corridor Observatory project is a collaborative effort between the Rangeland Wildlife Ecology Lab and the Predator-Prey Program at the Archbold Biological Station. The objectives of the Corridor Observatory project are:

1) Establish a scalable wildlife diversity monitoring system to determine baseline wildlife diversity metrics and patterns of wildlife space use in Florida’s rangelands.

Figure 1. Members of the UF/IFAS Rangeland Wildlife Ecology Lab and the Archbold Predator-Prey Program installing and maintaining the Corridor Observatory project at the DeLuca Preserve.
This newsletter provides just a quick glance at the wildlife diversity that occurs at the DeLuca Preserve - many more species also occur here but have not yet been detected on our cameras or acoustic recording units. Small animals, including rodents, bats, songbirds, reptiles, and amphibians, are not easily detected by our trail cameras. For example, over the course of our field work we have happened upon many other wildlife species at the DeLuca Preserve that we have not yet captured on camera, including hispid cotton rats (*Sigmodon hispidus*), swallow-tail kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), Florida pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*), and eastern narrow-mouthed toad (*Gastrophryne carolinensis*).

By establishing these baseline wildlife diversity metrics and patterns of wildlife occurrence, we are well situated to examine how wildlife responds to prescribed fire, grazing, and invasive wild pigs in Florida’s rangelands (Figure 4).

**Questions, contact Dr. Ellington at e.ellington@ufl.edu.**
Center News

Hurricane Ian Recovery

It has been eight months since Hurricane Ian’s damaging flood, and recovery efforts continue. In May, our new office furniture was delivered and we were all able to move back into our offices. Yay! Most of our office and lab buildings are now restored, however, we are still waiting on cabinets for our breakroom kitchen, the kitchen in the grazinglands education building, the LTAR and pasture weed science lab, and the built in desks in one of our student office rooms. Storm damage to the roof of the farm fuel shelter will be repaired in the near future.

Professional Development Tours

In early May, 8 UF/IFAS RCREC faculty, staff and students, 2 staff from UF/IFAS PSREU, and 1 from Deluca took part in tours of Archbold Biological Station and Buck Island Ranch, in Venus. The day began with a swamp buggy tour at the ranch lead by Program Director, Dr. Betsey Boughton and her assistant Megan Abram and concluded with a walking tour of Archbold Biological Station with Director of Education, Dustin Angell. We learned about the history of the properties and how they work together to benefit Florida through their research and conservation efforts.

Pictured at right are those taking part in the tours: L to R Dr. Brent Sellers, Debora Siniscalchi, Julie Warren, Natalia Fonseca, Andre Miranda, Jeremy Hall, Giovanna Santos, Denise Howell, Dr. Priscila Cruz, and Andrea Dunlap. In front, at right are Dr. Betsey Boughton and Megan Abram. Not pictured, joining us from Deluca was Brian Beasley.

A huge THANK YOU to the folks who made the trip a success.

Figure 4. Prescribed fire (a), cattle (b), and invasive wild pigs (c) can all impact wildlife diversity on Florida’s rangelands (d).
Field Day Highlights

Our April 20th field day was well attended with 127 cattle producers, industry professional, extension staff, and others joining us for the warm spring day. Attendees enjoyed visiting amongst themselves and with our sponsors at their trade show booths, morning and afternoon faculty presentations, and a delicious steak lunch. Click the links below or visit our website to access the field day handouts.

Video recordings available -

- Welcome - Dr. Brent Sellers, Professor and Center Director
- Guest Speaker - Dr. Scott Angle, VP for Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Guest Speaker - Wes Carlton, President of the Florida Cattlemen’s Association
- ‘Heat Mitigation During Gestation: What do we know so far?’ - Dr. Philippe Moriel
- ‘Updates on Groundwater Level and Quality’

A big THANK YOU to our sponsors -

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- Tide International USA - visit
- Wedgeworth’s Inc. - visit

Faculty & Staff News

Hannah Baker

Hannah Baker, state specialized extension agent II - beef cattle and forage economics comes on board this month. If you haven’t done so already, reach out to Hannah and introduce yourself at h.baker@ufl.edu.

Hannah is originally from Adel, Georgia. She obtained a dual bachelor’s degree in Agribusiness and Agriculture with an emphasis in Livestock Production from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and a master’s degree in agriculture economics from Oklahoma State University.

Randy Crawfis, maintenance generalist II, receives award

Randy was recognized for his dedicated response to Hurricane Ian damage recovery. He worked with UF/IFAS-FPO to get temporary office and research space up and running post-hurricane Ian which allowed important science to continue at RCREC-Ona.

On May 25, Randy received the award at the 16th Annual FAES Research Awards Ceremony, in Gainesville.
Ona Highlight Webinar Recordings

Save the date and join us for an upcoming Ona Highlight webinar. These informative presentations are held each month. They begin at 11:00 a.m. and last about 45 minutes. See our online calendar for upcoming webinars, here.

Recordings of recent webinars:

‘Broomsedge Management in Bahiagrass Pastures’ with Dr. Brent Sellers, professor & center director – Pasture and Rangeland Weed Management
3/14/2023 - Run time: 33.11 minutes

‘South Florida Beef Forage Program (SFBFP) Opportunities’ with Laura Bennett and Kalan Royal, extension agents with the SFBFP
4/11/2023 - Run time: 20.20 minutes

‘The Importance of Forage Testing to Supplementation Program Design’ with Dr. Joao ‘Joe’ Vendramini, professor, Forage Management
5/9/2023 - Run time: 42.25 minutes

Ona Reports - published in the Florida Cattleman & Livestock Journal:

View these on our website at: https://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu/news-and-publications/

Mar. 2023 - ‘Avian biodiversity on Florida’s rangelands’ by Zach Holmes, MS student and Dr. Hance Ellington, assistant professor – Rangeland Wildlife

Apr. 2023 - ‘DuraCor for Weed Control in Pastures’ by Dr. Brent Sellers, professor & center director - Pasture and Rangeland Weed Management

May 2023 - ‘South Florida Range Management for Cattle Production’ by Dr. Joao ‘Joe’ Vendramini, professor, Forage Management and Rob Kalmbacher, professor (retired), Range Management & Forage Crops
Caught on Camera

A monthly feature with images collected from RCREC game cameras mounted throughout the UF/IFAS RCREC property in Ona, FL.

View online

UF News

Florida remains #1 for Higher Education in U.S. News and World Report rankings for the Seventh Year

U.S. News & World Report has once again named Florida the top state in the country for higher education. Florida’s higher education system has held the top ranking since the inception of the rankings in 2017. This achievement can be credited to the collective commitment of our elected leaders, the Board of Governors, and the state universities to student success and affordability.

“Florida’s success would not be possible without the exceptional leadership at our 12 public universities, Governor DeSantis’s commitment to excellence in higher education, and the unwavering support of our legislative leaders. I am truly grateful for their investment and continued support,” said Brian Lamb, chair of the Board of Governors, which oversees the State University System. “Florida has long been a national leader in higher education, and retaining this #1 ranking proves the Florida way is working. By prioritizing student success, with an emphasis on providing all students a high-quality, low-cost education, Florida’s universities are leaning in to produce top-tier talent to meet workforce needs, increase research capabilities, and retain the best and brightest faculty whose excellence and expertise provide the platform from which we create the future.”

View the full article at: Univeristy of Florida News

UF/IFAS Range Cattle REC Faculty -

Dr. Brent Sellers, sellersb@ufl.edu - Pasture and Rangeland Weed Management

Dr. Maria Silveira, mlas@ufl.edu - Soil and Water Science

Dr. Joao Vendramini, jv@ufl.edu - Forage Management

Dr. Philipe Moriel, pmoriel@ufl.edu - Beef Cattle Nutrition & Management

Dr. Hance Ellington, e.ellington@ufl.edu - Grazinglands Wildlife Specialist

Dr. Golmar Golmohammadi, g.golmohammadi@ufl.edu - Watershed Hydrology and Biogeochemistry

Hannah Baker, h.baker@ufl.edu - Beef Cattle and Forage Economics
14th Annual Youth Field Day

THURSDAY
June 29

Birding tour (optional)
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
Learning Expo
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
Class Rotations & lunch
10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

3401 Experiment Station
Ona, FL

Our 2023 theme...

"Florida Land and Cattle - Treasures Worth Protecting"

The goal of this event is to excite students about agriculture and science, reveal future opportunities in those fields, and foster a love of learning which will promote agriculture and good stewardship in this and future generations. Students, ages 8 and up, parents, & youth leaders, are invited to attend! Register by 6/9 to pre-order a t-shirt!
See details & register: https://rcrec-2023-yfd.eventbrite.com

For more information email: ona@ifas.ufl.edu
An Equal Opportunity Institution.
Send a jpg of your design and your completed entry/release form to ona@ifas.ufl.edu by June 16.

Click here to view this flyer and the entry form on our website or scan the QR code at right