

# Educating with Extension



By Brynn Morey, Extension Coordinator, and in collaboration with Alicia Betancourt and Shelly Krueger

Volume 23 Issue 5

University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), Monroe County

May 2023

## Inside this issue:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Sea Grant News from Shelly Krueger        | 2 |
| Horticultural News                        | 2 |
| Master Gardener Volunteers can Help!      | 2 |
| Extension Director News Alicia Betancourt | 3 |
| Page 1 story continued                    | 3 |
| Sea Turtle Nesting Season                 | 4 |
| Contact us!                               | 4 |

### MAY HAPPENINGS



Sea Turtle Nesting Season  
Mental Health Awareness Month

**May 13th**  
World Migratory Bird Day



**May 11th-13th**  
I.Care Trash Derby  
I.CARE is hosting its first Trash Derby, sponsored by National Marine Sanctuary Foundation  
[icaretrashderby.com](http://icaretrashderby.com)



**May 14th**  
Happy Mother's Day



**May 19th**  
Endangered Species Day

**May 20th**  
World Bee Day



**May 29th**  
Memorial Day!! All County offices closed.



## The White-crowned Pigeon a Tropical Traveler

By Brynn Morey,  
Extension Coordinator

With World Migratory Bird Day just around the corner (May 13) I thought I would take some time to highlight a beautiful bird I learned to admire by simply glancing out the window of the Historic Gato Building in Key West. As I walked past the tall, former cigar factory windows, I saw what appeared to be a standard grey pigeon right near the glass, perched in a tree. Upon further inspection of the bird, I noticed this pigeon had white feathers on the top of its head, interesting! I thought to myself. So, I went back to my office and did some googling and discovered it was a white-crowned pigeon. A beautiful migratory bird that clearly, I knew very little about. This interesting bird staring back at me absolutely fascinated me, I had never seen one in the Keys before! I decided to do some research on my newfound feathered friend. And what I discovered was a fast, secretive and truly remarkable traveler that flies to some of the best tropical destinations around.



(photo above) White-crown pigeon outside the window at the Key West Gato Building

White-crowned pigeons inhabit low-lying forest habitats with ample fruiting trees. They primarily eat berries, figs, and other fruits. In the United States they are only found in Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay, and the Florida Keys. They travel all over the Caribbean, with destinations heavily influenced by population, reproduction numbers and food supply. They are considered permanent residents of Cuba and prefer to breed in Caribbean locations such as, the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, and Antigua.

White-crowned pigeons will typically arrive in Florida during early to middle May, and they will migrate to the Southern Caribbean islands during September. They are strong and fast flyers and often travel 30 miles daily between nesting and foraging habitats. It is widely believed that the flight speed of the White-crowned pigeon is faster than some motorboats.

## Plant Clinics

Wednesday, May 3rd  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Murray Nelson Govt. Center

102050 O/S Hwy. #244  
Key Largo

Thursday, May 4th  
**Plant Clinic**  
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Key West Garden Club  
1100 Atlantic Blvd.  
Key West

Saturday May 6th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Grimal Grove

258 Cunningham Lane  
Big Pine Key

Tuesday, May 16th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Garden Club of Upper Keys  
94040 O/S Hwy.  
Tavernier

Saturday, May 20th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Marathon Home Depot  
4555 O/S Hwy,  
Marathon

Saturday, May 20th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
KW Botanical Garden Nursery  
5210 College Rd.  
Stock Island

Thursday, May 25th  
**Plant Clinic**  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Island Home Nursery  
88720 O/S Hwy,  
Islamorada

# Sea Grant News



Shelly Krueger  
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Agent

Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Florida Sea Grant sponsored the Benthic Ecology Meeting in Miami and Shelly co-chaired the Coastal Ecology session and spoke about sponge restoration during the Sponge Ecology Session II to 80 participants.



- Shelly was invited to teach 225<sup>th</sup> grade students at Sea Camp about sponges and nearshore ecology and snorkel to identify sponges and sealife.

- Shelly taught Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council about stony coral tissue loss disease. The multiple hard coral species involved in stony coral tissue loss disease are not present at Gray's Reef off of Georgia, but the Council was keen to hear about their neighboring sanctuaries at Florida Keys and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuaries.



## The Environmental Horticulture Program and Master Gardener Volunteers remain dedicated to helping you with your plant related questions.



**CALL OUR OFFICE:**  
(305)292-4501

*We have many different ways we can assist!*

**VISIT OUR OFFICE:**

Email [Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu) or  
Call (305)292-4501 to schedule an appointment

**EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:**  
[mastergardener@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:mastergardener@monroecounty-fl.gov)

Please include a detailed description of the problem and photos if available

**FACEBOOK PAGE:**

Visit our Facebook page for updates, requests, information and so much more!

<https://www.facebook.com/MonroeCountyExtension>



# Horticulture News



*Join us in Welcoming our New Environmental Horticulture Agent!!!*



My name is Maria Quirico. I was a biology teacher for almost a decade, and in 2004, I graduated with a biology degree from the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Since then, I have been continuously teaching and learning.

During my undergraduate research thesis, I surveyed Basidiomycete fungi in the Ébano Verde Natural Reserve. Later, I was fortunate enough to be awarded a Fulbright scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Horticulture at the University of Arkansas. There, I focused on Molecular Biology, trying to understand the carotenoid metabolism in sweet potato storage roots, which was a challenging but incredibly rewarding experience.

In 2017, I had the honor of joining the University of Florida as a Biological Scientist II. My role was based in the Citrus Research and Educational Center, where I had the opportunity to work in the department of Citrus breeding and genetics under the esteemed guidance of Dr. Jude Grosser.

I am dedicated to helping Monroe County achieve their goals sustainably and responsibly through the sharing of my knowledge and the desire to serve.

In my free time, I enjoy creating music and paintings. I find my inspiration in nature.



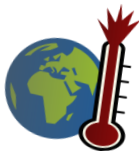
## Extension Director's News

Alicia Betancourt

UF/IFAS Family and Community Development Agent and  
Monroe County Extension Director

Alicia recently accomplished the following activities:

- A group of agents working in climate change met to develop a climate choices issue guide. This is the Florida version of the national issues guide from the Kettering Foundation. It will be previewed in May at the Extension Symposium.



- Alicia taught two more classes about Florida Keys fisheries as part of the Agriculture in the Classroom effort.

- As conference chair, Alicia organized and facilitated the Joint Council of Extension Professionals, Public Issues Leadership Development Conference for 244 Extension leaders and administrators. She led the plenary sessions, introduces speakers, and moderated panels. The theme was *Year-Round Advocacy* and she brought advocacy training workshops to help participants learn effective communication with national, state and local elected officials. Sessions on the structure and funding of Extension helped the 177 new participants understand federal capacity funds and federal agency partners such as USDA and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The three-day event culminated in congressional visits on Capitol Hill. Alicia participated in visits with the Florida delegation to remind representatives of the value and impact of UF/IFAS Extension.



- Alicia continues to work with Solar United Neighbors of Florida and has helped to launch the Florida Keys 2023 Solar Coop. Find out more at [SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Keys](https://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Keys)

Continued from page 1

White-crowned pigeons typically breed between May and September, although this can vary depending on the availability of food and habitat. When berries are abundant, the birds may breed as many as four times in one year. They prefer small islands offshore and isolated for nesting to avoid humans and predators. The male and female share a very strong bond and work together to build a loose platform nest of twigs typically high in the mangroves. After the female lays one or two glossy white eggs, the male incubates the eggs during the day while the female takes the night shift. White-crowned pigeons can be very skittish and are known to abandon their nest in response to human encroachment. Both parents feed the young a diet of “crop milk,” a fat and protein-rich secretion, for several weeks. The juvenile white-crowned pigeons will flee the nest 21-23 days after hatching.

The White-crowned pigeon plays an important role regarding seed dispersal and plant diversity, especially within the Florida ecosystem. Unfortunately, there is a decline in the white-crown pigeon population throughout Florida due to a heightened level of predator presence, as well as the deforestation of their ideal foraging ecosystems. Outside of the U.S. hunting is a major concern for the White-crowned pigeon. They are a popular game species. Although protected in Florida, they are still threatened by overhunting on many Caribbean islands. This beautiful traveler is classified as Near Threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.



I was lucky enough to catch a glimpse of one of these busy little birds. However, others may not be so lucky in the future. As a state-designated threatened species there are things we can do to help keep this species around the Florida Keys for many years to come.

- Avoid trimming or alteration of mangroves on uninhabited islands or lands set aside for conservation, preservation, or mitigation per Florida Statute 403.9323(2).
- Design projects to minimize loss of mangrove islands and tropical hardwood hammock. – Consider advocating for provisions to the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan regarding protection of tropical hardwood hammocks and other native habitats
- Adhere to Land Planning Regulations for the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern – Land development away from natural areas and sensitive habitats, restrictions to developing tropical hardwood hammock and mangrove habitats, and maintenance of native trees
- Reconsider removing poisonwood, which is a particularly important for nesting White-crowned pigeons
- Plant appropriate native fruiting species to provide foraging opportunities for White-crown pigeons
- Educate others regarding the species and its sensitivity to disturbance.

Resources:

<https://sites.psu.edu/birdsofcuba/birds-of-cuba/white-crowned-pigeon/>

<https://myfwc.com/media/11569/final-white-crowned-pigeon-species-guidelines-2016.pdf>

<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/birds/white-crowned-pigeon/>

Be sure to “Like” us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)!





**UF/IFAS/MONROE COUNTY EXTENSION**

1100 Simonton Street, Suite 2-260, Key West, FL 33040  
 102050 Overseas Hwy., Suite 244, Key Largo, FL 33037

KW Phone: 305-292-4501 KL Phone: 305-453-8747  
 KW Fax: 305-292-4415 KL Fax: 305-453-8749

General e-mail: [monroe@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:monroe@ifas.ufl.edu)  
 County Extension Director: Alicia Betancourt  
 Newsletter Editor: Brynn Morey, Extension Coordinator

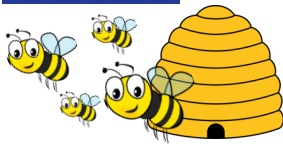
This newsletter can be accessed online at:  
<http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter.shtml>

We're on the Web at: <http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu>



University of Florida (UF)  
<http://SolutionsForYourLife.ufl.edu>  
<http://ufl.edu>  
 Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS)  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

Scan this code to go directly to our UF/IFAS Website for more information!



UF/IFAS Extension is Putting Florida First

*An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices. <https://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/ufifas-diversity-and-legaleo-statements/>*

**UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS**

|                          | Feb        | Mar        | April      | Totals       |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Phone calls              | 27         | 34         | 57         | 118          |
| Office visitors          | 4          | 5          | 4          | 13           |
| Email Consultations      | 52         | 59         | 113        | 224          |
| Learning events          | 18         | 15         | 16         | 49           |
| Participants             | 328        | 314        | 672        | 1,314        |
| Media submissions        | 3          | 4          | 2          | 9            |
| Publications distributed | 181        | 128        | 128        | 437          |
| <b>TOTAL contacts</b>    | <b>613</b> | <b>559</b> | <b>992</b> | <b>2,164</b> |



## SEA TURTLE NESTING SEASON

Sea turtle nesting season runs from May 1st through October 31st. Here are some ways to ensure the sea turtles have a safe nesting season.



**PETS**

Keep pets away from nesting turtles and don't allow them to dig up sea turtle nests.



**CALL SOMEONE**

If you see a sick or injured sea turtle, any signs of a possible sea turtle nest or someone disturbing a sea turtle nest please call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at 1-888-404-3922



**LEAVE THEM ALONE**

Do not touch sea turtles, newly hatched babies or their eggs. Disturbing sea turtles or their nests is a violation of state and federal law. Stay away from marked sea turtle nests and leave the barriers/markers in the ground.



**KEEP THE BEACH SMOOTH & CLEAN**

Take down sand castles, fill in holes, clean up any trash and put away umbrellas and chairs before you leave the beach. These can create deadly obstacles for newly hatched sea turtles.



**ARTIFICIAL LIGHT**

Turn off all exterior lights and keep the blinds closed at home. Don't light up the beaches with bonfires or flashlights.



**LOGGERHEAD**



**LEATHERBACK**



**GREEN**

**HUMANS ARE THE GREATEST THREAT TO SEA TURTLES.**

1 *in* 1000 WILL SURVIVE TO ADULTHOOD

MAY 20TH IS NATIONAL ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY!



Key Deer



Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit



Smalltooth Sawfish



Miami Blue Butterfly



White-Crowned Pigeon



Sea Turtles



Staghorn & Elkhorn Coral



Key Largo Woodrat

HERE ARE SOME OF FLORIDA KEYS ENDANGERED SPECIES