



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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The 2008 Ecotour Provider Series was designed to give ecotourism providers the knowledge, tips and tools to create more positive experiences for hosts and visitors and to encourage sustainable tourism practices. This series was co-organized by the Society of Ethical Ecotourism of Southwest Florida and the Coastal Training Program Department at Rookery Bay Research Reserve. Sponsors for this program included: Lee County Parks and Recreation, Foundation of Marine Industries Association of Collier County and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

This year's theme was *"Interacting with Wildlife: From the Shore to Sea!"*. Throughout this series participants were provided with the tools needed to positively interact with Southwest Florida's wildlife. The workshop topics included terrestrial animals, shorebirds, marine invertebrates and marine mammals. Each workshop was held twice per month from June to September in Lee and Collier Counties. More than 350 new and returning ecotour providers and educators attended this workshop series.

To measure the success of this program, we distributed evaluations to participants to assess their overall satisfaction with the program logistics, their increased scientific understanding of sustainable ecotourism, and their increase of knowledge about positively interacting with local wildlife. At the conclusion of this series 71% of the participants completed an evaluation summarizing their overall experience. Upon further analyses of these evaluations 92% of the participants rated the overall conference logistics including general content, speakers, Power Point presentations, handouts, organization, and networking opportunities above average (<4). A total of 93% of the participants agreed that their overall scientific understanding of sustainable tourism for visitors increased. Also, a total of 91% of the participants agreed that they increased their overall understanding of how to interact appropriately with terrestrial and aquatic animals as a result of these workshops. Ultimately, more than 50 participants from Lee and Collier counties received certificates of participation recognizing their dedication to this year's series by attending 3 or more workshops.

Moreover, the workshop planning committee is confident the desired objectives were met. The committee will use feedback from each participant to assist in successfully developing next year's workshop format. If you have any questions please contact Tabitha Whalen Stadler at (239) 417-6310 ext. 209 or John Kiseda at (239) 432-2163.

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