

Year in Review

Guy Harvey – artist, scientist, diver, angler, conservationist and explorer – served as Honorary Chair of the Friends of Rookery Bay's 4th annual signature fundraiser, the Batfish Bash for the Bay, in March. The event included a silent auction, Olde Florida fare, band and dancing, as well as Patron Party two weeks prior. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and guests, we raised \$64,000 to benefit the Reserve's youth and adult education programs.

Fisherman, artist and former host of the "Tarpon Bay Tales" fishing show Alex Suescun shared his experiences during the Reserve's National Estuaries Day celebration in September and the Friends of Rookery Bay annual meeting in March.

Friends of Rookery Bay's mission is to support the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's activities, and the Reserve had many significant achievements during this fiscal year.

In May, the Reserve hosted Greg Munson, Deputy Secretary for DEP's Water Office of Policy as well as the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board and the Big Cypress Basin Board, organizations two that met in Collier County for the first time. The groups discussed the Picayune Strand State Forest restoration project, the first of several

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Projects to get underway in south Florida. Rookery Bay Reserve is directly downstream of the restoration project and a direct beneficiary of additional freshwater flows that will arrive when the first pumping station comes online in fall. The previous month, Rookery Bay staff and Big Cypress Basin staff visited each other's properties to better understand the impact of the restoration project on both entities.

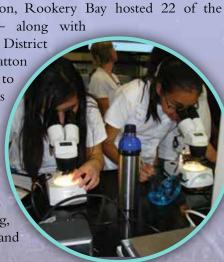
In April, the Reserve celebrated
National Everglades Day
with dignitaries including
Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart;
Zach Zampella, Regional Director
for Senator Marco Rubio; and Collier
County Commissioner Donna Fiala.

Visitors to the Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center are watching a new film that provides an overview shot from land, water and sky of the Reserve's 110,000 acres. The 10-minute "Rookery Bay – A Special Place" was shot and directed by Elam Stoltzfus with Live Oak Production Group and narrated by Peter Thomas, who both worked on the previous film shown in the Center's auditorium. J. Robert Houghtaling of Marco Island composed the music and score. Fabien Cousteau, Guy Harvey and Clyde Butcher make cameo appearances.

A leatherback sea turtle entangled in a crab trap approximately three miles west of Caxambas Pass on Marco Island was rescued by resource management in cooperation with Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) law enforcement. This species is rarely found on Florida's west coast, and staff enjoyed the opportunity to release this endangered species.

When 120 Lely High School students produced video shorts on environmental topics in partnership with Discovery Education, Rookery Bay hosted 22 of the students plus families – along with

Collier County School District
Superintendent Kamela Patton
and other district faculty – to
honor five student teams
who received certificates,
plaques and goodie
bags. The Reserve also
hosted its annual "Girls
in Science Day," where
15 middle school students
enjoyed hands-on learning,
a boat trip in the Reserve and
science experiments.



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Rookery Bay Quick Facts

Manages 110,000 acres from Gordon Pass through the Ten Thousand Islands

Home to 150 species of birds and many threatened/endangered animals

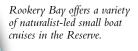
One of 28 national estuarine research reserves

Promotes informed stewardship of the coast through research and education

Field trip spot for all Collier 4th graders as well as students up through university level

Managed by FL DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas in cooperation with NOAA

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center is visited by 35,000 people annually





from Mike Davis Elementary School explore a diamondback rattlesnake skin.

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Connecting people with Southwest Florida's dynamic estuarine environment through education, engagement and stewardship by supporting the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Annual Report Editor

Robin DeMattia

Cover photo credit

Alberto Chavez