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Volunteers key for Archbold

They play a large role in helping organization fulfill its goals

“I work with the kids at summer camp. What a joy when I see and hear them having so much fun while learning about nature. There is no better reward,” says Pat Talbott, who volunteered over 100 hours during this season of Archbold’s Ecology Summer Camp. Pat was recruited three years ago by his friend and long-time Archbold volunteer, Lee Andrus. The organization relies on Talbott, Andrus, and more than 65 other volunteers each year to help with outreach as well as land management, scientific research, events, and many other activities. Last year, volunteers contributed more than 3,000 hours of services to the organization.

“Archbold is an impressive biological field station with many achievements under its belt, but we could not pursue our mission without volunteers,” claims Dustin Angell, Archbold’s Education Coordinator, who oversees the volunteer program. “Volunteers have been especially helpful as we have increased our outreach and community connections over the last five years. They are our ambassadors in the community.”

Archbold’s volunteers come from diverse backgrounds. Some are high school and college students, while others have backgrounds as principals and teachers, policemen and first responders, or surveyors and scientists. Archbold’s Executive Director, Dr. Hilary Swain, appreciates what each volunteer adds to the Station’s culture: “Working at Archbold is like being part of a family. We welcome volunteers as they bring so much to our organization, not only in the many ways they help us directly, but also for their different views and life

perspectives. Our interns and students especially appreciate the wisdom, advice, and 'little touch of home' that many volunteers share.”

Being part of Archbold gives volunteers the opportunity to learn and experience Highlands County in a unique way. Some volunteers make a habit of attending science lectures, helping in the natural history collections, or helping with researchers. Other volunteers enjoy being outdoors and hope for encounters with rare wildlife. All learn to appreciate the area in which they live in a new and special way.

After three years, volunteer Linda Gette finally got to see a wild Eastern Indigo Snake this winter. Gette’s response shows the wait was worth it: “What a wonderful day! I have been wanting to see an Indigo for so long. Snakes amaze me in general—the way they move, hunt, eat. The Indigo is a huge [up to 8’ long and thick-bodied], blue-black, smooth animal that moves more slowly than many snakes. It is so calm—almost seems friendly.”

Gette drives down from Virginia and for the last three years has spent each winter living at the Station and volunteering full-time. Like Talbott, she enjoys working with kids, but also, she says, “I love getting out into the field and learning from Archbold staff and interns. Whether searching for scrub-jay nests, tracking Gopher Tortoises, measuring pond depths, or counting Florida Rosemary stems, the work is fascinating. And the people at Archbold just fill me with awe.”

Archbold may depend for the most part on its trained scientific and administrative staff, but it’s clear that volunteers play a large role in helping the organization fulfill its goals. Together, staff and volunteers work as partners to understand and protect Florida’s precious natural resources, and share their appreciation of science and nature.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at Archbold please contact Dustin at dangell@archbold-station.org or (863)465-2571x233. Archbold has indoor and outdoor work, work for shy or outgoing people, work that is physical or relaxing. Learning Center greeters are particularly needed. Whoever you are, whatever you like to do, Archbold has a rewarding place for you!

Photo 1: Volunteer Pat Talbott (center) at summer camp with teen volunteer Wesley Clark (left) and intern Stuart Yurczyk. Photo by Dustin Angell.



Photo 2: Volunteer Lee Andrus helps a summer camper plant a milkweed flower for Monarch Butterflies. Photo by Dustin Angell.

