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Archbold's Buck Island Ranch wins multiple awards at Florida Cattlemen's

On June 19, the Florida Cattlemen's Association kicked off its three-day Annual Convention in Championsgate, FL. The Florida Cattlemen's Association is "a statewide, non-profit organization, established in 1934, devoted to promoting and protecting the ability of cattlemen members to produce and market their products." Filled with exhibition hall booths, a trade show, educational seminars, auctions, a banquet, and social events, the Convention is a time to socialize, network, learn, play, and relax. Their theme this year was "share your passion," and Archbold Biological Station's Buck Island Ranch sent a passionate crew of researchers and ranchers to attend the event, including Executive Director Dr. Hilary Swain, Director of Research Dr. Betsey Boughton, and Ranch Manager Gene Lollis.

Amidst the festivities were some special moments for Archbold. At Thursday evening's banquet, Archbold's Director of Research Dr. Betsey Boughton received the special honor of Florida Cattlemen's Association "Researcher of the Year." Boughton was distinguished for her success and relevance in multiple aspects of the cattle industry: research, conservation, outreach, and education. "My research is focused on wetland and water management, understanding how grazing and fire affect wetlands and grasslands, and more recently, understanding the ranchland carbon cycle," Dr. Boughton explained in her acceptance speech. "A large part of the research program at Buck Island Ranch is focused on wetlands not only because they are so critically important for plants and wildlife on ranches, but also because wetlands have the potential to act as a sponge for both water and nutrients, cleansing water

before it leaves the ranch and heads downstream to Lake Okeechobee. As a natural extension of working in wetlands, I have also been involved in water management and monitoring projects that are truly win-win for agriculture and conservation.”

“In addition to water and wetland management, I have been working with collaborators to understand the carbon cycle on ranchlands,” continued Dr. Boughton. “This is important because agriculture can be a large source of carbon and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, and there is a push for the industry to reduce carbon emissions to be sustainable. Our research has shown that wetlands and wet soils are a large natural source of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 25 times the strength of carbon dioxide, and that cattle were only responsible for 19-30% of the annual methane emissions. This result is important because cattle emissions are generally considered the dominant component of pasture methane budgets, but we showed this was not true for Florida pastures. As agriculture comes under ever more scrutiny regarding greenhouse gases, data such as these provide important information for Florida ranchers.”

Of Boughton, Executive Director Swain says, “Her record of accomplishments demonstrates great success and relevance for the cattle industry in Florida. Her position is recognized as one that requires a unique combination of skills and interests and she has been very successful in all aspects: she is publishing in top-tier scientific journals, has launched and coordinated a successful outreach program on sustainable agriculture, and she is involved in a number of educational programs that focus on translating research for ranchers, students, and the public.”

Earlier in the week, Archbold’s Buck Island Ranch also received the honor of “Sustainable Rancher of the Year,” presented by Audubon of Florida to “the Florida cattle ranch that best exemplifies outstanding conservation stewardship.” “Well managed cattle ranches produce a wealth of important wildlife habitat. In fact, some of Florida’s most important wildlife habitat is located on these privately owned ranches,” said Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy at Audubon of Florida, while presenting the award. “Buck Island Ranch has outstanding wildlife populations: Archbold scientists have documented more than 722 plant and animal species at the Ranch, including 6 federally threatened or endangered species who call this place their home.”

Buck Island was chosen not only for protecting wildlife habitat on ranch lands, but also serving the entire cattle industry by “documenting how cattle ranching and our natural environment can co-exist.” “We are much honored to receive this award,” said Ranch Manager Gene Lollis, who accepted the “Sustainable Rancher of the Year” award alongside Executive Director Swain. “We want you all to know that we are here to work for the industry and to help other ranches reach their conservation goals.”



Photo 1: Archbold's Buck Island Ranch Director of Research Dr. Betsey Boughton accepts the Florida Cattlemen's Association "Researcher of the Year" award. From left to right, Convention Speaker Red Steagall, Researcher of the Year Betsey Boughton, Research Committee Representative Chance Clay, and Florida Cattlemen's Association President Ken Griner. Photo by Hilary Swain.



Photo 2: Archbold's Executive Director Hilary Swain and Ranch Manager Gene Lollis accept Audubon of Florida's "Sustainable Rancher of the Year" award on behalf of Buck Island Ranch. From left to right, Ranch Manager Gene Lollis, Executive Director Dr. Hilary Swain, Audubon of Florida Director of Advocacy Charles Lee, Florida Cattlemen's Association President Ken Griner. Photo by Deborah Pollard.



Photo 3: Archbold's Ranch Manager Gene Lollis accepts Audubon of Florida's "Sustainable Rancher of the Year" award on behalf of Buck Island Ranch. Photo by Deborah Pollard.