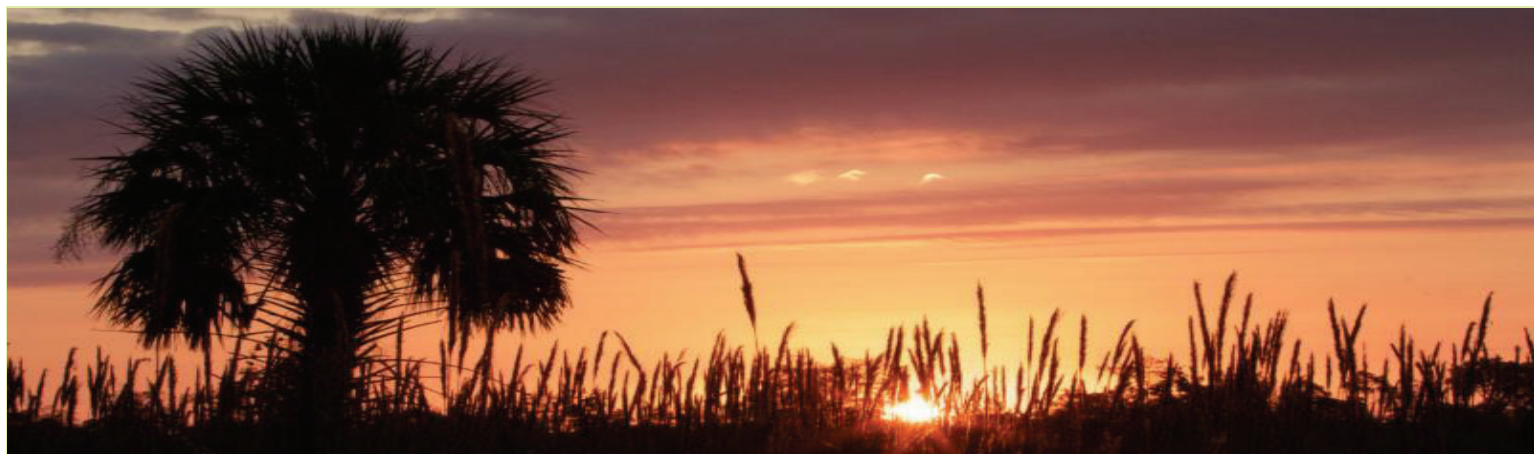




# AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES

PO Box 15914 West Palm Beach, FL 33416-8914  
www.AudubonEverglades.org



Audubon Society of the Everglades

May 2016

Hello,

The Audubon Society of the Everglades (ASE) would like to welcome you to our Conservation Email Communiqués. Everyone receiving this email indicated his or her interest in Conservation when signing up with either ASE or when visiting the [ASETripinfo@gmail.com](mailto:ASETripinfo@gmail.com) link.

With so many important conservation issues affecting Palm Beach County residents, ASE intends to make a concerted effort to inform you of pertinent issues that we believe may adversely affect wildlife, water, and the environment in Palm Beach County, the Everglades, and Florida, as we become aware of them. Our goal will be to keep you informed and, at times, to give you specific information and talking points to allow you to effectively make your voice heard on important conservation issues that you might wish to support through a phone call, a letter or email, or by attending an important hearing.

As we are made aware of them, we also will inform you of naturalist related learning opportunities and activities where you can personally lend a hand, such as beach and park clean ups, plantings, etc.

## **Issue: Save John Prince Park**

A very important development has recently come to our attention. John Prince Park, one of Palm Beach County's oldest parks and a wonderful family public park, is being threatened by the proposed construction of a Spring Training Baseball Facility, which would usurp nearly one half of the unusable free access park space. Both the PB County Commission and the Lake Worth Commission are currently supporting this heist of public property. Contact information follows talking points.

**Facts and talking points as compiled by Mary Watson of Lake Worth:**

John Prince Park is home to the Florida Gopher Tortoise. Where the Board of County Commissioners is planning to put this stadium is highly populated with this threatened species, the Gopher Tortoise.

Why so important? It is a "lynchpin" species and some 400 other species depend on it. It preserves the biodiversity and functioning ecology of the park and keeps the natural area in balance. Its burrows, which may be up to 40 feet long, are also protected. Any construction needs to get a permit from Fish and Wildlife Commission, a more complex permit would be necessary as there are surely greater than 10 located here. This is documented. (They even have a smart phone app, so we can pinpoint with GIS the location of burrows.)

Spring training is right in the midst of their mating season and these are very shy creatures. Each one must be removed and relocated to a suitable environment and a penalty of more than \$3000 per tortoise paid to FWC. Entombment or burying the tortoise is strictly forbidden and there is a 24/7 hotline to report any violations 888-404-FWCC. Protected under Florida Statute 68-A-27. Some time back there were plans to develop an area of the airport next to this. It was scrapped partially due to being a tortoise habitat.

2. This park is deed restricted since 1939. It is the legacy of John Prince, a great county commissioner, who convinced developers to donate this land--so the beauty and nature would be preserved for future generations. As one person said very aptly: "John Prince Park is our Central Park." It is a natural body of water, not man made. The deed states it is to be used "for park and forest only," NOT a stadium. Many people and families both locally and coming from other areas use it daily for recreation, fishing, exercise, community events and charity events such as races. There is no other near area in the park to relocate all these activities. Along with the tortoise there are other threatened species and many birds, wading birds and migrating birds. Among them are great blue and white herons, Limpkins, Burrowing Owl, and nesting for the Great Horned Owl.

3. I am told the Audubon Society of the Everglades planted many memorial trees there close to the Custard Apple Slew. [This is accurate.] This would be destroyed, as well as the campground, which just since January has brought in \$4 million.

4. There is a very good article from Bloomberg Business Magazine (<http://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-atlanta-braves-stadium/>) explaining that the return on investment for baseball stadiums is a mere 11 cents on the dollar of invested money. This will cost us anywhere from \$110-\$230 million dollars, all of which will be paid for by us, the taxpayer. They are planning this little venture the same year they are asking us to increase the sales tax (a regressive tax which hits the poorest the hardest) by 17% for the next 10 or 20 years. Katie's article shows how this is really a game of the billionaires (like the Braves) who "sucker" a city into building this for free for them with the promise of economic benefit. It is a myth as this never happens. The city will pay several hundred million and in 10-20 years the Braves, worth 1.2 BILLION, will leave for greener pastures, and will be stuck with another blighted area like before. This is irresponsible totally from a financial perspective; in a county supposedly so strapped for cash they are asking us to increase our tax rate. We need this like a fish needs new expensive high heels. And this is interesting: there is usually a 1 million dollar "finders fee" that goes to the person, persons who arrange this for the corporation.

4. The argument that this is a great opportunity for our young aspiring baseball fans is very slanted. Thousands who presently enjoy the park will lose that and many cannot afford the \$45 to attend these games. This is ... at the expense of all the people who presently enjoy the park--which of course was the purpose the park was created. I believe this would also destroy two newly created park areas: new exercise machines by the walking trail, and next to that a unique wheelchair handicapped exercise area. And we the county taxpayers recently paid for this.

5. This is taking deed restricted public property and confiscating 80 years of thriving native ecology to destroy at least half of it for a corporate entity worth \$1.2 billion. This is charity to the billionaires paid doubly by us [the taxpayers] who lose a park and get a whopping big bill for 20 years.

**"Just the facts"**

<b>Areas in acres</b>	
726	John Prince Park total (published figures)
-338	Lake Osborne (published figures)
388	Total land area
-30	Golf Center (calculated from satellite images)
-48	Campground (published figures)
-44	Maintenance Area (calculated from satellite images)
-42	Administration Buildings and associated parking (calculated from satellite images)
<b>224</b>	<b>Land area available for free public use</b>
	<i>For Comparison:</i>
114	Palm Beach State College
304	Airport (includes wooded area contiguous with the park maintenance area)

Who to call, write, or email:

**Palm Beach County Commission:**

Dist. 1: Vice Mayor Hal R. Valache:  
 301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
 (561) 355-2201, 877-930-2201  
 HValeche@pbcgov.org

Dist. 2: Commissioner Paulette Burdick:  
 301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
 (561) 355-2202, 877-930-2202  
 pburdick@pbcgov.org



Dist. 3: Commissioner Shelley Vana:  
301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
(561) 355-2203, 877-930-2203  
svana@pbcgov.org

Dist. 4: Commissioner Steven L. Abrams:  
301 North Olive Ave.  
Suite 1201 WPB, FL 33401  
(561) 355-2204

South County Complex  
345 South Congress Ave.  
Delray Beach, FL 33445  
(561) 276-1220, 877-930-2204  
SAbrams@pbcgov.org

Dist. 5: Mayor Mary Lou Berger:  
301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
(561) 355-2205, 877-930-2205  
MBerger@pbcgov.org

Dist. 6: Commissioner Melissa McKinlay:  
301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
(561) 355-2206, (877) 930-2206  
MMcKinlay@pbcgov.org

Dist. 7: Priscilla A. Taylor:  
301 North Olive Ave. Suite 1201  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
(561) 355-2207, (561) 276-1350  
ptaylor@pbcgov.org

Lake Worth Commission:

Pam Triolo, Mayor  
561.586.1735  
ptriolo@lakeworth.org

Scott Maxwell, Vice Mayor & District 1  
561.586.1731  
smaxwell@lakeworth.org  
<http://blogscottmaxwell.com/home>

Christopher McVoy, Ph.D District 2  
561.398.6115  
cmcvoy@lakeworth.org

Andy Amorosa, District 3 Vice Mayor  
561.586.1733  
561.398.8340 Cell  
aamoroso@lakeworth.org

Ryan Maier, District 4  
561.586.1734  
rmaier@lakeworth.org

ASEConservation@gmail.com  
*"We can make a difference."*



Audubon Society of the Everglades | PO Box 16914 | West Palm Beach | FL | 33416-6914