

# Teacher's note: Why Teach About Native Plants for Birds?

We wrote this booklet to help create more sustainable habitats for birds with Florida native plants. During the past 50 years, North America has lost 3 billion of its entire bird population according to the Journal of Science. This booklet is designed to help enable elementary school and home school teachers to teach the natural world to students. We want to inspire communities to enrich school grounds and backyards with native plants. Our goal is to learn with the assistance of fun activities and playing games while encouraging general ecological philosophies and sustainability in urban areas. Native plants enhance urban planning within a natural world. Every child should have the right for an outdoor natural classroom.

We found a wonderful source called Green Schoolyard America, who created a dynamic guide with 130 activities for children between the ages of 3-18. The Living Schoolyard Activity Guide ([http://ecoschools.com/Assets/Documents/GSA-LSYM\\_2018sc.pdf](http://ecoschools.com/Assets/Documents/GSA-LSYM_2018sc.pdf)) was written by 122 organizations all across the United States. Although it takes awhile to load, it is well worth the wait. As we thumbed through the pages, it made us wish we were starting all over again, teaching with a whole new arsenal! Science is interwoven throughout the activities and lesson plans. Watershed stewardship, energy and climate have huge sections of games, activities, experiments and lesson plans. Community engagement, thoughtful use of materials and recycling ideas are demonstrated in the activity descriptions. We loved the exciting camouflage caterpillar - bird relay game and painting with garden paint brushes. There are activities that create empathy for nature, healthy choices, risk taking, diversity and sustainability. In addition math, business, agriculture, culinary arts and journaling are included. Moreover, there is an International School Grounds Activity Guide produced by the International School Grounds Alliance with 100 different activities.

**To help you get started, a flash drive containing a powerpoint presentation with lesson plans (including STEM Core curriculum standards) is available. Learn how you can help protect our birds by bringing back our native plants. Teach the children how to have fun learning about our natural world by solving puzzles and exploring! Contact Bren Curtis to obtain the flash drive. Meanwhile enjoy our booklet. Our tiny hummingbird will guide you through our booklet with page numbers and humdingers (facts and sayings).**

## Booklet Creators and Life-long Learners

Bren Curtis, the Conservation Chair of the Peace River Audubon Society Board co-authored the booklet. She is an active bird monitor and sea turtle patroller in Sarasota and Charlotte Counties and holds a high school wildlife biology teaching certificate. She is a delegate to Everglades Coalition and Audubon Regional Conservation Committee. She mentors high school and FGCU students. She has ten years combined experience as a California Elephant Seal Docent and Nashville Zoo Keeper. She loves to travel to wilderness areas like Alaska, Uganda-Rwanda Gorilla Mountains, Kenya-Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Aruba. She can be reached by email at [bctrackwalker@gmail.com](mailto:bctrackwalker@gmail.com).

Linda Soderquist is a retired elementary teacher who has embraced a second career as a watercolor artist. She regularly exhibits her work in Florida galleries and art festivals. Her love of the outdoors was nurtured during the many years she lived on the bridgeless barrier Little Gasparilla Island working with shorebird protection and sea turtle conservation. Venice Area Audubon Society provides her with the opportunity to create and coordinate education programs for second graders in twelve local schools and supervise field trip activities to the Venice Rookery. Visit her website [www.LindasIslandArt.com](http://www.LindasIslandArt.com) to see her watercolors of birds, landscapes, and beach scenes. You can reach Linda at [linist@hotmail.com](mailto:linist@hotmail.com).