

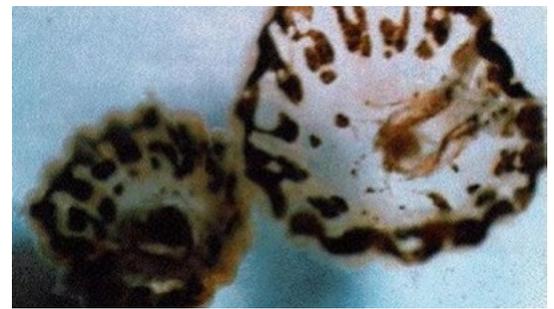
Hammock Happenings

Gumbo Limbo Nature Center: Closed But Still Caring

September 2020

What is Sea Lice?

Sea lice is a classic example of something not named appropriately. Sea lice is a common skin condition people can get after swimming in the ocean in the Summer and has nothing to do with head lice. It is more correctly described as sea bather's eruption, a skin irritation caused by jellyfish larvae found naturally in the water. Most of the time the jellyfish that is responsible for this condition is that of the thimble jellyfish. The adult jellyfish are about the size of your thumbnail (0.5-inch diameter) and the offending polyps are the size of a pinhead. However, there is a group of animals called sea lice that have unfairly been given a bad reputation; true sea lice are parasitic to fish and not known to affect humans.



Thimble jellyfish. Photo credit: Florida Department of Health

Most commonly, an itchy rash develops where the jellyfish polyps have touched skin the longest. Swimsuit bands and straps are typical locations where small red bumps develop. The fabric of the suit acts as a catch point for the larvae, leading to extended contact with the skin. The itchy red bumps are usually small and in localized areas on the body. In extreme cases, sensitive persons, could exhibit symptoms on any exposed skin. However, most people do not notice any signs of being stung until after they get out of the ocean.

After contact with "sea lice," it is recommended to remove your swimsuit and shower as quickly as possible. The shower may cause more stings from the jellyfish caught in the suit and it is best to get it off the skin first. Contaminated swimsuits should be washed, and heat-dried to make sure that any remaining jellyfish larvae have been eliminated.

Skin treatment is usually by over-the-counter anti-itch creams like hydrocortisone. If symptoms persist or worsen be sure to visit your physician for further treatment and diagnosis.

Thimble jellyfish and their larvae are most common from March through August around the southern coasts of Florida and the Caribbean. Changes in current, storms, and strong winds coming in off the ocean can push these creatures near the beaches where we like to swim and recreate. If you are unsure of local conditions make sure you check all posted signage about local sea life prior to entering the ocean. If you see a purple flag, beware!

By Keith Herman, Aquarist

Manager's Corner

Welcome to another all-digital, all-virtual version of Hammock Happenings. We have some new and exciting programs for you and your family this month – look inside for more information about our virtual tours, new and exciting programs, and a [Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz!](#)

September is traditionally when we would host the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) on our beaches in Boca. This is an annual worldwide beach cleanup that started in 1985. This year, due to the COVID-19 restrictions prohibiting large gatherings, we will not be coordinating an annual community beach cleanup. Instead, we are asking that you make a trip to your nearest beach to pick up trash and record your findings at a time that fits your schedule. Any trash cleaned up between September and December will count towards this year's ICC with the Ocean Conservancy's Clean Swell App. More information and a link to download the app are on our [website](#). I hope you can join us in our efforts to keep the beaches and oceans free of marine debris.

Speaking of websites, have you had a chance to check out all our new additions to keep you and your family engaged? Take a moment to read our [Nature Blog](#), to see how our team has been discovering nature in their own backyards during this time. You never know what you might find when you take the time to look closely at the wonderful world just outside your door!



Children enjoying StoryWalk in the Pondhawk Natural area.

If you live nearby, I encourage you to visit the [StoryWalk](#) recently installed at Pondhawk Natural Area next to the Spanish River Library in Boca Raton. This is an exciting collaboration between our colleagues at the Boca Raton Public Library, Friends of the Library, and Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resources Management. A storywalk is a fun and educational activity that combines an opportunity to read a book while getting some exercise along an accessible walking path.

Finally, Friends of Gumbo Limbo's online gift store is going live on Friday, September 4! Check it out at [ShopGumboLimbo.org](#). I hope you are as excited about this as I am!

Until next time, Leanne Welch, Manager

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Uncovering a Legacy of Litter

It has been nearly a year since the exhibits team was tasked with updating the *Marine Debris Timeline* exhibit. The original, although worn, sun bleached, and a bit broken, has had a powerful impact on visitors over the years. Three dimensional models of various waste items were displayed with their decomposition rates. Depending on the item, it could take decades or even hundreds of years for the object to decompose, a stunning reminder that many items used for minutes have a longer lifespan than our own; especially plastic. Plastic can be found everywhere in modern life and in many places it shouldn't be, but this was not always the case. For our new marine debris exhibit, we wanted to step back and uncover the larger story: How did we end up here?



A portion of the "Marine Debris Timeline" worn by weather.

Our investigation into the history of plastic marine debris brought us all the way back to 1862, when plastic was formally introduced as a groundbreaking invention. Lightweight, durable, inexpensive, and available in an array of colors, plastic was heralded as a manufacturer's dream. Still, plastic kept relatively quiet up until World War II, when Americans needed it for the mass production of war supplies; after the war ended, they wanted it for nearly everything else! Plastic offered a beautiful new promise for modern consumerism and household commodities. In the 1970s we began to realize that this new material may be overstaying its welcome, as plastic outlasted its use. Heaps of discarded polymers filled landfills and trickled into the sea. A process called recycling was implemented to soften this concern. Yet as years pass, recycling has proven to be a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. The following decades would uncover plastic from the ocean's surface to the deepest parts of the sea. Plastic has even found its way into the marine food chain, and we still don't know what that means for wildlife - or for us.

All of this research felt a bit heavy at times. But eight months into this project we found ourselves with a comprehensive, chronological look at the rise and fall of plastic. We knew that presenting this information alone was not enough – our goal is to inspire our guests to be environmental stewards. Meaning, we need not only to show the 158-year story of plastic, but our role in it. To do this we have woven in "rise above" buoys as part of the exhibit to teach individuals how to reduce their plastic use.

Developing this exhibit has been quite a journey, yet it is only a small step on the larger journey to healthier oceans. The exhibits team is looking forward to sharing this project with you. We hope you will engage, remember, and reflect on the legacy of litter. We cannot change our history; however, we can use what we have learned to collectively create a better future.

By Megan Barry, Exhibits Assistant



Artist's rendering of The "Legacy of Litter" installed on the rear ramp.

This exhibit was made in collaboration with Gumbo Limbo's Aquarist Bryan Danson, Dr. Peter G Ryan from the University of Cape Town, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with funding from The Davenport Family Foundation and Friends of Gumbo Limbo.

Washback Season is Coming

It's that time of year again! Our first washback of the 2020 nesting season has arrived. Each year from August-October, our Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Facility admits an influx of washback sea turtles. What is a washback you ask? A washback is a young sea turtle from approximately a few days to a few months old, that "washes back" along our shorelines during heavy seas and storm events. Usually these tiny turtles are in a weakened state from injuries or eating plastic. Many have algae or barnacles growing on their carapace because they haven't been actively swimming. Last year, our facility treated over 750 washback sea turtles for plastic ingestion and other injuries. While in our care these turtles receive fluids and treatments to help pass the plastic or heal any external wounds. Many of those washbacks were released successfully – over 600! Unfortunately, approximately 130 died in our care. After performing necropsy examinations, we have found plastic in the stomach and intestines of almost all of those tiny turtles. Plastic pollution is a huge problem for sea turtles at all life stages, but young washback sea turtles are especially vulnerable. We encourage everyone to support our [REFUSE Campaign](#) to minimize single use plastics and help create a brighter future for all marine life.



*A loggerhead washback.
Note the green algae growing on it!*

By Caitlin Boverly, Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Assistant

Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz!

All month long, the City of Boca Raton is celebrating *STEAM through September 2020*, with science, engineering, technology, arts, and math themed activities and professional spotlights to help inspire and challenge your future scientist! September is also the National Parks and Recreation Association's [Parks for Pollinators Month](#); a month where parks and recreation departments around the country collaborate in a massive citizen science program to support local pollinator populations.

It only felt natural that Gumbo Limbo Nature Center should combine the two celebratory months to create a state-wide *Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz!* Using any smartphone or smart device, YOU can become a scientist. Create an account with [iNaturalist](#) and join our project. Then download the *iNaturalist* app (or *Seek* by *iNaturalist*, which is a child-friendly version of the same app). Using the app, you can photograph any bee, bug, butterfly, or flowering plant. The app identifies the species for you and shares cool pictures and information. It will also upload your photo log to a national database where environmental scientists confirm species identifications and help develop population maps of important pollinators and the plants they rely on.

Though often quite small, pollinators have a huge impact on community health. They ensure we have food to eat and can combat invasive species that can throw ecosystems into disarray. The data developed by Parks for Pollinators helps drive smart and targeted environmental policy aimed at protecting native pollinator species. From which plots of land to protect, to how we landscape street medians, cities like ours rely on this data to make informed decisions.

We want you to get involved! Tell your family, tell your friends! There's a pollinator crisis on our hands and you can help by taking a walk through your neighborhood! Really, it's that easy. Take pictures of interesting bugs and flowers from your backyard, neighborhood, or local park. All data collected in the month of September will be included in the BioBlitz report. Check out our [team page](#) for more information!

By Cory Keester-O'Mills, Exhibits Coordinator and Christie Collins, Science Educator

Gumbo Limbo Nature Programs, Virtually

We miss having you here in person...we would love to be leading, teaching, paddling, and beachcombing with you in person! Like you, we can't wait to get back to doing the things we love, in the ways we love doing them. But for now, we are doing everything we can to make sure that anyone who wants to, can continue to learn about and appreciate the amazing nature that surrounds us.

So, what's new in virtual Gumbo Limbo Land? In August, we added a virtual version of a popular Gumbo Limbo program, Seining the Lagoon! Seining is a special type of dip netting, using a two person rectangular net with poles on each end. Wading in up to waist-deep water, our educators collect fish, shrimp, crabs, and other marine animals to identify and observe. Using a combination of prerecorded and live media, it's the next best thing to being here!

We also completed a series of Gumbo Limbo virtual tours including our Sea Turtle Garden, Butterfly Garden, Hammock Forest, Aquariums, and Sea Turtle Rehabilitation. These can be viewed on our website or on [YouTube](#) for personal enjoyment, a home school lesson, or just to learn more about our South Florida coastal habitats.

Don't worry, we haven't forgotten about our littlest naturalists; [Little Wonders \(ages 3-4\)](#) and [Nature Detectives \(ages 5-6\)](#) will continue monthly with new topics and pick-up craft kits.

Who's never been to one of our Sea Turtle Talks in the Rehabilitation Facility? Between the cool facts, our awesome turtles, and the amazing work of our rehabilitation staff, what's not to love? Next month, be on the lookout for Sea Turtle Talks and more of our programs going virtual, including [The Science of Nature](#), and our popular Homeschool Workshops. Our homeschool theme for this month is *Decomposers and Scavengers!* Visit [Homeschool Workshops](#) for a complete listing of dates, times, and virtual experiences!

Finally, don't miss [At Home with Gumbo Limbo](#), with monthly themed educational activities for kids! From pre-K story time to activities for older kids, families can enjoy learning together at home and in their own backyards with our activities. Topics include lizards, insects, gopher tortoises, sea turtles, and more! Hey, we work hard to make learning fun, so join us and become the best nature nerd you possibly can!

By Susan Elliott, Environmental Program Coordinator

Featured Patient: Wormhole



Wormhole, a juvenile green turtle, was rescued from the Deerfield Beach International Fishing Pier after being hooked by a fisherman for the fourth time! During this fourth stranding, Wormhole was hooked in the mouth and flipper and had fishing line entangled around the neck. Previously, a hook had been removed from her jaw and Wormhole made a full recovery. After being released from Red Reef Park (Boca Raton) the first time, Wormhole was hooked again for the second time at the same pier and swallowed the fishhook, requiring surgery. Wormhole was encountered a third time at the Deerfield Pier when she was released after the fishermen removed the hook and reported her flipper tag numbers to us. After this most recent encounter, Wormhole will likely be returned to sea further away from the pier to discourage the interaction

with recreational fishing piers. [Visit our website](#) for updates about Wormhole. Read all about our research on turtles that get hooked on piers repeatedly in the July 2020 issue of [Hammock Happenings](#).

In case you were wondering about Wormhole's name : We name our patients with an alternating theme, A-Z. Wormhole was admitted during our naming theme of space.



FRIENDS OF GUMBO LIMBO



HOW YOU CAN HELP GUMBO LIMBO NATURE CENTER

ADOPT A TURTLE

It can be tough to find the perfect gift... But look no further! Consider giving the gift of charity to those you care about. Hatchling or resident sea turtle "adoptions" available at GumboLimbo.org/Adopt

MEMBERSHIP

Become a Friends of Gumbo Limbo member today! Be kept in the loop about upcoming virtual programs, and enjoy exclusive discounts and early access. Find the full list of member benefits at GumboLimbo.org/Membership

PAVE THE WAY

An engraved paver at Gumbo Limbo is a personalized way to show your support for our mission. Find out how you can help pave the way at GumboLimbo.org/Pave-The-Way



THE GUMBO LIMBO GIFT SHOP

Friends of Gumbo Limbo has worked hard at a complete overhaul of our store, with a strong focus on sustainable and recycled products.

We're thrilled to announce our new online store, where you can shop from the safety of your own home while still supporting Gumbo Limbo!
ShopGumboLimbo.org

Once we are able to open again, you'll be welcome in a new store onsite that will allow appropriate social distancing measures to ensure your safety.



Gumbo Limbo Nature Center

Hours & Information

We remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Boardwalk is open 7:30 am - sunset with access from Red Reef Park West parking lot. Check gumbolimbo.org for updates.

General Information (561) 544-8605 · Volunteer (561) 544-8538
Friends of Gumbo Limbo (561) 544-8608 · Gift Shop (561) 544-8610
1801 North Ocean Boulevard, Boca Raton, Florida 33431
gumbolimbo.org

Suggested donation of \$5 per person.

Your donations go to Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, Inc. to support Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, including, but not limited to, feeding the animals, purchasing supplies and services for the Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Program, and creating exhibits.

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Science Educators - Christie Collins, Alyssa Saldarriaga
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Exhibits Assistant - Megan Barry
Exhibits Intern - Winston Miller

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Sea Turtle Conservation Coordinator - David Anderson
Marine Turtle Specialists - Rachel Brown, Lisa Esposito,
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Sea Turtle Rehabilitation

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Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Assistants - Caitlin Boverly, Emily Mirowski

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