

Lee M. Walton, CWB

Senior Ecologist/Principal



Expertise

Wildlife Ecology

Avian Protection Plans

Specialized Wildlife Management

Environmental Permitting

Water Resource Management

Education

M.S., Biology, Villanova University, 1997

B.S., Entomology and Applied Ecology, University of Delaware, 1994

Certifications

Certified Wildlife Biologist, The Wildlife Society

FWC Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent, GTA-09-00024A

SWFWMD Wetland Assessment Procedure (WAP)

Professional Affiliations

The Wildlife Society

Phi Kappa Phi, National Academic Honor Society

Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society

Lee Walton has extensive experience in ornithology, wildlife ecology and management, environmental permitting, and community ecology. Specific areas of expertise include the design of holistic management plans for lands with listed species, design and implementation of wildlife monitoring and management plans, and biological resource inventories. His primary responsibilities include listed species permitting, listed species surveys, wildlife relocations, avian risk assessments, and wildlife monitoring.

WILDLIFE ECOLOGY

Project Manager - Listed Species Survey, Manatee County, Florida

Conducted surveys and trapping for listed species, including but not limited to crested caracara, burrowing owl, bald eagle, gopher frog, Florida scrub-jay, Florida mouse, eastern indigo snake, Sherman's fox squirrel and gopher tortoise for the 4,300-acre project.

Project Manager – Wildlife Survey Methodology Development for an Approximately 15,000-Acre Parcel, Hardee County, Florida

The survey methodology included conducting a baseline habitat, flora and fauna survey, providing appropriate protection measures for listed species currently occupying the site and with the potential to occur on the site management activities for preserved, enhanced and created habitat areas. This management plan was written according to the Florida Department of Community Affairs guidelines and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Project Manager – Holistic Habitat Management Plan Development for an Approximately 15,000-Acre Parcel, Hardee County, Florida

This plan included presentation of baseline habitat, flora and fauna information and proposed management activities for preserved, enhanced and created habitat areas. This management plan was written according to the Florida Department of Community Affairs guidelines and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Project Manager - Gopher Tortoise Mitigation Bank, Alachua County, Florida

Obtained a permit from the FWC to establish the first certified Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site in Florida. The first phase of the 16,000-acre Plum Creek Timber Lake Lochloosa project is able to accept 1,781 gopher tortoises from multiple users within Florida.

Project Manager - Shorebird and Colonial Waterbird Management Plan, Dare and Hyde Counties, North Carolina

Conducted surveys for piping plovers and colonial waterbirds on Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout National Seashores in response to several beach closures by the National Park Service (NPS) and legal challenges to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Critical Habitat determination for plovers. Reviewed scientific data on piping plovers and colonial nesting waterbirds to prepare several comment letters and declarations to the NPS and the FWS. Comments contained within these letters were incorporated into the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy prepared by the NPS.

Project Manager - Environmental Toxicology Study Investigating Organochlorine Pesticide Contamination in Wading Bird Eggs, Lake and Orange Counties, Florida

Designed and conducted a study in which wading bird (little blue heron, snowy egret, and green heron) eggs from Lake Apopka, nearby colonies, and colonies across the state were collected and analyzed for organochlorine pesticides as part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area Project.

Project Manager - Listed Species Assessment, Manatee and Desoto Counties, Florida

Conducted surveys and trapping for listed species, including but not limited to, Florida grasshopper sparrow, red-cockaded woodpecker, crested caracara, burrowing owl, bald eagle, gopher frog, Florida scrub-jay, Florida mouse, eastern indigo snake, and gopher tortoise for the 24,000-acre project.

Project Manager - Crested Caracara Monitoring and Home Range Mapping, Manatee and Hardee Counties, Florida

Conducted nest monitoring and territory mapping for several pairs of crested caracaras during a multi-year study for Mosaic Fertilizer Company. One pair of caracaras was captured and fitted with a radio transmitter to conduct radio telemetry home-range mapping.

AVIAN PROTECTION CONSERVATION PLANS

Project Manager - Avian Protection Plan and Avian Risk Assessment, Throughout, Florida

Designed and implemented an avian protection plan for a large utility company to reduce avian interactions with electrical utilities. Aspects of the plan included conducting an avian risk assessment, research and development of construction and retrofitting techniques to make electrical utilities avian-safe, developing standard procedures to address avian injuries/mortalities, nest management techniques, and developing an employee training program.

Project Manager – Bald Eagle Nest Management Program, Throughout Florida

Developed a nest management plan to enhance eagle nesting on artificial structures owned by a utility company. The plan included conducting an eagle risk assessment, development of nest management practices, implementation of a nest platform program, and development of nest removal guidelines. The plan was submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval.

Project Manager - Southeastern American Kestrel Protection Program, Throughout Florida

Developed a habitat management plan to enhance kestrel nesting habitat on lands currently owned or managed by a utility company. The plan included conducting a kestrel risk assessment, development of habitat management practices, implementation of a nest box program, and development of nest removal guidelines. The plan was approved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and incorporated into a service area migratory bird nest removal permit.

Project Manager - Least Tern Habitat Management Plan (HMP), Polk County, Florida

Conducted a risk assessment for nesting least terns on mine lands. The results of the risk assessment were used to design and implement a protection program for nesting least terns to ensure that the colony would persist.

SPECIALIZED WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Project Manager - Florida Scrub-jay Habitat Management Plan (HMP), Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk, and Hardee Counties, Florida

Prepared and implemented a large-scale (80,000 acres) Florida scrub-jay HMP. The goal of the HMP was to maximize the long-term probability of persistence of the scrub-jay metapopulation with minimal short-term risks.

Project Manager - Multi-species Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, Pasco County, Florida

Established and managed the 1,000-acre gopher tortoise recipient site on the Cypress Creek Wellfield. Prepared and implemented a long-term holistic land management plan for the property that focused on improving the habitat for gopher tortoises. Other faunal species in the plan include southeastern American kestrel, Florida sandhill crane, Sherman's fox squirrel, eastern indigo snakes, wading birds, and gopher frog. Implementation of the plan will restore native upland habitats on the property while successfully reducing the liability associated with high fuel loads. Successfully conducted prescribed burns and mechanical management prescriptions on the property.

Project Manager - Florida Burrowing Owl Habitat Management Plan Hillsborough, Manatee, Hardee and Polk Counties, Florida

Developed and implemented a study plan for Florida burrowing owls in an effort to document the population status of burrowing owls on mining lands. The goals of the study plan were to (1) gather baseline data on the distribution, reproductive success, survival, dispersal, habitat requirements, and food habits of Florida burrowing owls and (2) use the data to evaluate various potential future options to manage Florida burrowing owls. Since the inception of the study plan in March 2004 extensive burrowing owl surveys have been conducted on the property in an effort to establish baseline population data and color band burrowing owls. In an effort to continue to work toward protecting burrowing owls, Mr. Walton assisted in the first translocation of burrowing owls in Florida.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING

Project Manager - Substation and Transmission Line, Throughout Florida

Provided site assessments, wetland delineations, general and species-specific listed species surveys, FWS and FWC listed species permitting, listed species relocations, and permit compliance monitoring for several substations and transmission lines in Florida.

Project Manager - Mixed-use Development, Hillsborough County, Florida

Provided the due diligence, formal wetland delineation, and listed species surveys and permitting for the Triple Creek Project in Hillsborough County, Florida. Obtained the wetland permits from the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission,

Southwest Florida Water Management District, and US Army Core of Engineers. Triple Creek is unique in that it includes a contiguous 100-acre habitat preservation and restoration area as mitigation for the agencies.

Project Manager - Mixed-use Development, Lewes, Delaware

Assisted with environmental permitting of a golf course community in coastal Delaware. The project included a Section 7 consultation with the FWS to negotiate development activities within the primary zone of a bald eagle nest.

Project Manager – Natural Resource Conservation Service Wetland Determinations

Obtained certified wetland determinations from the NRCS for several large Florida ranches. Certified wetland determination offers landowners assurance of a federal wetland delineation as long as the property remains in agricultural use.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Project Manager - Cross Bar Ranch and Morris Bridge Wellfields Hydrological and Ecological Monitoring Program, Pasco and Hillsborough Counties, Florida

Managed the ecological monitoring program that was developed for the Cross Bar Ranch and Morris Bridge Wellfields. Services have included quantitative and qualitative monitoring of vegetative changes (Wetland Assessment Procedure, WAP), assessment of wetland condition, statistical analyses, expert witness testimony, aerial photographic interpretation, and analysis of water levels in nearby water bodies to determine potential wellfield effects during drought periods.

PEER-REVIEWED, PUBLISHED PAPERS

Walton, L.M., S.M. Gonzalez and K.R. Campbell. 2004. Organochlorine Pesticide Levels in Wading Birds Eggs: Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area Project, 2002-2004. Prepared for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Gainesville, Florida.

Curry, R.L., L.M. Walton, R. Bowman, G.E. Woolfenden and J.W. Fitzpatrick. 1998. Patterns and consequences of nest-site selection in Florida scrub-jays *Aphelocoma coerulescens*. 22nd International Ornithological Congress, Durban, SA. Ostrich 69: 280.

Walton, L.M. 1997. Florida scrub-jay nest-site selectivity in unfragmented, periodically burned vs. fragmented, overgrown habitat. M.S. Thesis. Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania.

Bowman, R., L.M. Walton and A.L. Fleischer. 1995. Contributions of a Suburban Population of Florida Scrub-Jays. Annual Report, USFWS, Jacksonville, Florida.