

“All that is harmony for thee, O Universe, is in harmony with me as well.”

- Marcus Aurelius, “Meditations”

Donor spotlight:

Turner explains why he wants to nurture environmentalists

Beau Turner leads the way in environmental giving. One of media magnate Ted Turner’s five children, Beau runs the land operations of the Turner Foundation, which represents the largest private holding of land in the United States – nearly 2 million acres. Two years ago, Turner leased 160 acres southeast of Tallahassee to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Together, Turner and the FWC opened Florida’s first youth hunting and fishing facility in March 2008 – the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center in Jefferson County. The Wildlife Foundation of Florida holds the funds for the BTYCC, which is the only conservation center in Florida running entirely on solar power.

Q. Mr. Turner, what is this facility for?

A. It’s a place where kids can learn and develop fishing and hunting skills, while appreciating all the things the great outdoors has to offer. Along the way, we plant in them the seed that, if nourished, will help them to blossom into tomorrow’s conservationists, naturalists or stewards of wildlife and land.

Q. How does that work?

A. When children and young adults get outdoors and have fun in the fresh air, and experience the excitement of hitting a target with an arrow, reeling in a nice-size fish, being the first to call out the proper

name of a bird high up in a tree, shatter their first clay pigeon or bag their first waterfowl, the success triggers the desire to do it again.



Photo by Tim Donoan, FWC

Beau Turner talks about his vision for teaching conservation to kids as he enjoys the beauty of the 36-acre pond at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center on 160 acres near Tallahassee.

Q. And then ...?

A. The more they learn which animals and fish are regulated, and why, and the more they learn about what these animals need to live, the more likely they are to grow to care about the future for wildlife. Hunters, you know, were among the first conservationists. At conservation camps, youths learn what’s fascinating and important about various ecosystems and about wildlife management techniques.

Q. Your partnership with the FWC is the spark that ignited the agency’s effort to build more of these centers around the state, via the Youth Conservation Centers Network. Why did you give so much for this project?

A. Well, I’m worried that the next generation of kids won’t have the opportunity to revel in nature, to see wildlife, to hunt and fish, because open land and forests are disappearing, and species after species are threatened by this loss of habitat, by pollution and by other factors. I wanted to make a difference.

Q. What’s special about this place?

A. This center is just one of the pieces of the puzzle. There is no other real opportunity for kids to sign up and do the things they can do here. And everything is free.

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Q. What can others do to help this initiative?

A. The people and communities around the BTYCC are what made it successful. Landowners agreed to share 900 acres adjacent to the youth center for the FWC's Youth Hunting Program, which aims to preserve hunting traditions in Florida for future generations. I challenge all landowners to do the same, on whatever scale they can manage. Not helping kids enjoy the outdoors will bring devastating results. Even if one farmer or rancher would invite one child out to the land to show him where food is grown and livestock are raised, that can make a difference.

Q. What's next for you?

A. Florida's youth conservation center serves as a model. I'll use the model to create others of its type on ranches owned by my family across the country and in South America. Turner land is committed to conservation. In the meantime, I'm planting native longleaf pines and wiregrass on the family's plantation near the BTYCC to restore the wildlife-friendly native habitat it once had – one that supports a lot of different animals.

Q. Any parting advice?

A. In an age where we're competing against video games and computers, it's important that we introduce our children to outdoor activities and that our communities continue to protect natural areas. If children have no place or reason to get outdoors, then we may lose our next great naturalist who respects and loves the land.

Internships geared to guide youth toward conservation careers

Eight students from a Jefferson County high school are the lucky recipients of summer internships at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center. A \$10,000 directed gift from the Jane Smith Turner Foundation paid them to work and learn about wildlife and conservation for four weeks, beginning June 28.

The grant is on behalf of Jefferson County Middle/High School. It introduced 17- and 18-year-olds to careers in conservation. The Wildlife Foundation of Florida is making it happen. If the program is successful, Jefferson High Principal Dr. Rodney Ryan may try to steer federal funds into the program, to make it ongoing.

The four females and four males in the program expressed interest in a variety of wildlife-related fields, from fishing and hunting to aquatic plant management, reptiles, law enforcement and forestry.

During their four weeks, they helped with personnel, land and water programs and worked on the 160-acre Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center. They participated in fish-shocking to

restock a pond. They got to see where and how Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission law enforcement recruits train, learn about replanting tall pines and wiregrass to create native habitat, and learn dove-trapping techniques.

One of the field trips was to a wildlife management area, where they discussed public use and recreation, infrastructure maintenance, cultural resources and nuisance bear abatement.

Many conservation agencies conduct

wildlife surveys. Interns learned how scientists survey eagles, wading birds and wood storks. On another day, they had a hands-on experience with snakes.

Who knows? Answering their innate curiosity about these fields may create the next generation of scientists, law enforcement officers, technicians or office personnel dedicated to protecting Florida's wildlife. And in the process, eight young people could find direction and purpose in their lives.



FWC Marketing Coordinator Tim O'Neil poses with the eight students selected to be paid summer interns at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center.