

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE BALLENSLES WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



NATURE MATTERS

Spring 2017



Photograph by Jack Robbins

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Dear Friends,

The “season” for many BallenIsles residents has come to an end. However, the “season” for wildlife is in full gear. Birds of all kinds are building nests, laying eggs, and rearing their young. Female aquatic turtles are emerging from ponds to find the perfect spot to dig a nest, lay eggs, and then return to the water. We ask that all drivers be especially vigilant as ducks, sand hill cranes, and turtles, among other wildlife, cross our roadways more frequently this time of year. Two large soft-shelled turtles were recently run over by cars on BallenIsles Drive—one in late April and the other in mid-May; both were injured so badly that they had no chance of surviving. In addition, if anyone spots an injured animal or a cat (without a “notched” left ear) and/or kittens, please contact me immediately at 410-703-9786. Our Board of Directors and volunteers are dedicated to helping ALL our residents—human and non-human.

“I am in favor of animal rights as well as human rights. That is the way of a whole human being.” —Abraham Lincoln

Naturally yours,
Marianne Guerra

Mission Statement and Foundation Goals of BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation

BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation (BIWF), a nonprofit 501©(3) charitable organization, is a group of volunteers who love and respect animals. Our inspiration comes from Mona Roberts, a resident of Bermuda Bay, who during her 18 years in BallenIsles devoted herself to the rescue and rehabilitation of animals in need.

BIWF MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation is to preserve, foster, and respect all animal life in the BallenIsles community.

BIWF FOUNDATION GOALS

- Aid and assist injured animals, stray animals, and lost pets found in BallenIsles.
- Maintain a feral cat TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, return) program for the BallenIsles community to avoid overpopulation.
- Educate and inform BallenIsles’ residents about wildlife/animal/flora matters.
- Maintain and establish working relationships with, assist, and endorse wildlife and animal organizations that help BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation achieve our mission and foundation goals.

[DONATE NOW](#)

In the Spotlight

Alexis Smith: The BallenIsles “Goddess of Gardening”

by Jackie Fabisch



Alexis Smith, BallenIsles horticulturalist, is not a newcomer to the community. She was responsible for the initial development of the landscaping in BallenIsles from its beginnings. Employed as the BallenIsles horticulturalist

from 1990 until 1999, she worked for the Country Club until 1995 and then for the Community Association until 1999. She literally laid the groundwork for BallenIsles to become renowned for its outstanding community grounds.

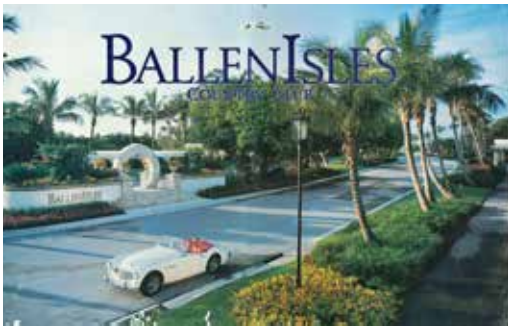
Luckily for everyone in BallenIsles, she returned in January 2016 to preserve and improve the beauty that surrounds the community. Since her return, four new pump stations for the common area grounds have been installed and the monitoring of the sprinkler systems has been computerized. Alexis oversees the esthetics and the inner workings of everything landscape-related on all the common area grounds in BallenIsles—a formidable task.

Alexis grew up in a nature-loving family. Her grandparents owned a cotton farm in Alabama, and her mother was a floral designer in Miami where Alexis was raised. She earned a master’s degree in plant pathology from the University of Florida in Gainesville and still “eats and sleeps” plants. Her home is on four acres in Stuart, Florida, where she has an orchid and bromeliad nursery. In addition, she has published seven scientific articles, travelled to South America to explore the jungle and river plant life, is the past president of the Jupiter Orchid Society, participates as a vendor at plant shows, and worked for many years for a landscape maintenance company. Here at BallenIsles, she oversees the landscaping work being done by contractors in zero lot-line neighborhoods and consults with private homeowners. At present Alexis shares her home with her 22-year-old daughter, three dogs, a cat, and a cockatiel—evidence of her love of family and fauna as well as flora!

Educating people is one of Alexis’ greatest pleasures. For example, to explain what plants require to thrive, she tells homeowners about the acronym **WANTS: Water, Air, Nutrition, Temperature, and Sunlight**. When sunlight and temperature increase, plants need more water and nutrition. Alexis is passionate about helping others understand what is needed to make their flowers and greenery healthy. The result is that the plants flourish and the people experience

heightened enjoyment of their surroundings. She encourages residents to call her at any time for onsite landscape consultation and advice or simply to answer a specific question.

Alexis views life as an adventure. She wants to learn and notice something new every day. She recommends that residents and visitors alike take a walk through the community and appreciate the lushness that surrounds them. Pointing out “we live in plant nirvana here,” she is in awe of how truly beautiful BallenIsles is. We who live in BallenIsles know the secret to its beauty, and her name is Alexis Smith!



1995 photo of PGA entrance



2017 photo of PGA entrance



1995 photo of tennis courts



2017 photo of tennis courts

FLORIDA'S LARGEST OWL: The Great Horned Owl

by Jack Robbins

My wife Myra and I live in Florida in the community of BallenIsles, which we view as a nature preserve. Last spring, we were sitting in our backyard when Myra shouted, "Something big just flew into the palm tree!" I immediately stood up to investigate, and to my surprise there it was—a Great Horned Owl. I grabbed my camera and shot many photos of this owl, who actually seemed as if it were posing for me. A few days later while I was in the backyard with my camera at the ready, I was very lucky to be able to photograph the very same owl flying right above me. These amazing encounters inspired me to share some interesting facts on this magnificent species.



STATUS

The Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) is found throughout most of North America and much of South America. Florida's largest owl, it stands to a maximum height of 2 feet; the female weighs about 4 pounds and the male about 3 pounds. The name derives from their appearance—large tufts of feathers that protrude from their ears and look like horns. Aggressive and powerful at hunting, sometimes nicknamed tiger owl or hoot owl, they take prey as varied as rabbits, hawks, snakes, and even skunks; they will also attack porcupines, often with fatal results for both prey and predator. When Great Horned Owls begin nesting in the north, their deep hoots can be heard rolling across the forest on mid-winter nights.

The Great Horned Owl population is widespread and common, and their numbers apparently hold up well in most areas. Their habitats include forests, woodlots, sides of stream, and open country. In North America they can be found in almost any habitat—from swamps to deserts to northern coniferous forest near tree lines. However, during the breeding season Great Horned Owls require some trees and brush for cover.

A Story of Survival with the Help of Some Friends

According to Public Affairs Specialists Tina Shaw and Courtney Celley from the USFWS Midwest Region, in March 2016 a storm knocked down an urban great horned owl nest in a Minneapolis park, and two 4-week-old chicks were discovered on the ground. As with most species, great horned owl parents continue to care for their young on the ground, feeding and protecting them as much as they can. Normally, if you find baby birds on the ground you should not interfere with Mother Nature, but because this nest was in a busy park filled with people and domestic animals, staff at the University of Minnesota Raptor Center decided to intervene.

To protect these young owls, volunteers trained in nest creation built a sturdy nest structure big enough to provide room for the quickly growing owlets and strong enough to withstand strong storms. The new, reinforced platform was placed high in a large white pine to protect the owls from the potential dangers of a high traffic area, to provide cover, and to allow passersby to view the owls from a safe, respectable distance.

As can be seen in the videos (below) taken a month later, the owlets appeared to be doing quite well, and mom was keeping a close eye on them. They were practicing flapping and strengthening their wings in preparation for venturing out onto nearby branches to explore the world just outside their nest.



Credit: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEEDING BEHAVIOR AND DIET

Hunting mostly at night but sometimes at dusk, the Great Horned Owl watches from a high perch, then swoops down to capture prey in its talons. It has extremely good hearing and excellent vision in low light conditions. In the north during the winter, it often stores uneaten prey, coming back



Baby Great Horned Owl in tree at Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Del Ray, FL

later to thaw out a frozen carcass by “incubating” it. Their diet is varied, consisting mainly of **LIVE** mammals (in most regions) and birds—and even small dogs and cats! Especially in the north, Great Horned Owls also eat birds up to the size of geese, ducks, hawks, and smaller owls. Although they rarely eat fish, they do eat snakes, lizards, frogs, insects, and scorpions. They rarely if ever eat carrion.

NESTING AND REPRODUCTION

Great Horned Owls begin nesting in late winter in the north, possibly so that young will have time to learn hunting skills

before next winter begins. In Florida, where Great Horned Owls live year round, they breed chiefly in winter and lay their eggs from December to March. During courtship, the male performs displays of flight and feeds the female. Although they can construct their own nests, Great Horned Owls usually nest in an abandoned heron or hawk nest; occasionally the owls sometimes evict the “rightful owner” and take over occupancy. Their nest is usually 20 to 60 feet above ground. They also nest on a cliff ledge, in a cave, in a broken-off tree stump, and sometimes on the ground. After they occupy the nest, they add little or no nesting material aside from occasional feathers.

Great Horned Owls mate for life and lay one clutch of eggs per year. The female typically lays two to three eggs, sometimes one or five, and rarely six. The eggs are dull whitish. Incubation is done mostly by the female for 28 to 35 days. Once the eggs hatch, both parents take part in providing food for their youngsters. At 5 weeks of age, the chicks begin to leave the nest and climb on nearby branches. They can fly at about 9 to 10 weeks of age but are tended to and fed by their parents for up to several months.

MIGRATION

Most Great Horned Owls do not migrate, but individuals may wander long distances in the fall and winter, some of them moving southward. Our Florida owls are full-time residents. Although not listed as threatened or endangered or even migratory, Great Horned Owls are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

So watch for this awesome bird in a tree or in the sky almost any time of the year in Florida. Lucky you if you spot one!

Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League Needs Volunteers To Foster Kittens

Peggy Adams Rescue League is the largest animal rescue shelter in Palm Beach County focused on completely eliminating dog and cat euthanasia in Palm Beach County by 2024. They have made tremendous progress through their adoptions, shelter, kitten nursery, TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, and return), wellness, and fostering programs.

Kitten season has already begun, which presents Peggy Adams with a tremendous challenge given the length of kitten season here in Florida (9 months). If they are able to dramatically increase the number of foster “parents,” many kittens’ lives will be saved. Fostering kittens is a short-term commitment and enables these precious babies to become healthy and social and ready for adoption.

Being a foster parent not only saves kittens’ lives, it also enriches the lives of every volunteer. A foster parent typically houses and cares for the kitten(s) for 2 to 4 weeks or a bit longer. Kittens generally return to the shelter for spaying/neutering at 8 weeks of age. They are then available for adoption once they recover from their surgery. Peggy Adams provides the foster parent with all supplies and wellness requirements, which includes food, litter, toys, vaccines, etc. Their foster program also offers community service hours for children 10 to 17 years old.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent for Peggy Adams, please contact Shannon Clounts at S.Clounts@peggyadams.org or on 561-472-8578.

BIWF Volunteers Visit Caring Fields Felines

By Mary Kirby



property nearby was purchased to replicate with improvements the existing sanctuary. The relocation of over 150 cats took place in early August 2013 in the midst of intermittent torrential rains and 90-degree temperatures. Pauline, volunteers, and professional movers persevered, and by early August the move was completed. Over the ensuing months, additional work was done to make Caring Fields the Canyon Ranch of cat sanctuaries.

Now, in 2017, about 170 cats live in large outdoor specially fenced areas, each with a Key West-style cat condo that they can enter at will, or a large indoor compartmentalized space with cat door access to an outdoor screened-in porch for senior cats, a kitten nursery, or the feral cat campground where cats who have lived outside their whole lives reside. CFF is governed by a board of directors and cared for by a small dedicated

On April 4, 2017, volunteers from the BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation and the Ibis Wildlife Foundation visited a very unique place that is heaven on earth for homeless cats and kittens. We spent an inspirational afternoon in Palm City touring Caring Fields Felines created and run by Pauline Glover, the Mother Teresa of cats.

staff and many volunteers, who assist in everything from feeding and socializing the cats, to keeping the facilities spotlessly clean, comfortable, and safe 365 days a year.

There are plenty of places for the cats to climb and explore, soft spots and furniture on which to nap in the Florida sunshine, and safe places to protect them from the elements.

If you look out at the gorgeous five wooded acres that is Caring Fields Felines (CFF), you will see cats, a main residence where Pauline and her husband live, several other structures, some more cats, and plenty of space for whatever wildlife wishes to pass through—including cats. It all began with the cats in 2000 when Caring Fields was first established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to solve a feral cat problem on Jupiter Island. For almost 13 years, about 150 cats lived on a 5-acre property that was developed to provide them with a secured, free roaming sanctuary. Then, in 2012, the property was sold, and another 5-acre



Cat cottages



Interior of cat cottages



Kittens awaiting adoption



Senior cat home

Even cats that are FIV-positive have a second chance of having a healthy and long life at CFF; these special needs cats live together in a separate enclosure at the sanctuary where they enjoy happy, productive lives in spite of their diagnosis. Medical care is provided as needed, although most are completely asymptomatic and are among the most friendly and personable at the sanctuary. Many are available for adoption to those committed to maintaining a one-cat home and providing for their medical care.

Pauline graciously greeted us, educated us about the sanctuary, and invited us to “roam around and explore,” which is exactly what we did. Between the 14 of us, we visited almost every square foot and petted almost every cat. Whether we were indoors or out, there was never an odor of any kind!

CFF health checks, vaccinates and spays or neuters every cat under their care, after which many are available for adoption. Pauline facilitates an average of 200 cat and kitten adoptions each

year, creating a happier world, not only for the cats but also for those who adopt them. A recent cat adopter wrote this thank you note: “I renamed him Gandalf after the Grey Wizard in Lord of the Rings! I think he was born to be my cat. He is very attached to me. I think he knows he’s been rescued as he has rescued me as well!!”

CFF is privately funded, receiving no financial aid from federal, state, or county governments, and the vital services they provide to the community of cats are made possible by the generosity of donors (www.cffelines.org). Their mission is to reduce the overpopulation of unwanted felines through spay and neuter, adoption, and education. They accomplish this by offering:

- A weekly spay/neuter clinic in cooperation with Savanna Animal Hospital in Jensen Beach
- Community outreach for the spay/neuter of owned and free-roaming cats
- An adoption program for kittens and cats at the sanctuary
- An adoption program in cooperation with PetSmart in Jensen Beach
- A foster program to socialize and ready cats for adoption
- Outreach to local schools, scout troops, and civic organizations, for the purpose of educating others about responsible pet ownership and CFF’s role in the community.

We finally tore ourselves away to drive home—in awe that such a remarkable place run by such a remarkable woman and her staff and volunteers exists no more than a 40-minute drive north.

Volunteers Needed To Help BIWF Fulfill Its Mission and Foundation Goals

RESCUE

1. Learn how to implement and help to perform any or all functions of our Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return (TNVR) program for feral cats found in BallenIsles.
2. Foster and/or help to socialize abandoned kittens rescued in BallenIsles.
3. Assist in finding forever homes for our rescued, fostered, and socialized kittens.
4. Feed a Community Cat or Cats (cats that have been TNVRed) year round, during “season,” or during “off season,” or substitute for primary “feeder” when he/she is unavailable.
5. Provide veterinary care.
6. Transport injured wildlife to Busch Wildlife Sanctuary for rehabilitation or, if necessary, humane euthanasia.

NATURE MATTERS MAGAZINE

1. Solicit articles
2. Write articles
3. Proofread articles
4. Submit photos

COMPUTER SKILLS

Birds of a Feather...

The two Purple Martin birdhouses donated to BallenIsles by the BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation (BIWF) are alive with birds, nests, eggs, and hatchlings!

On April 8, BIWF began doing nest checks every Friday at 4 p.m. Each week has seen an increasing number of nests, eggs, and hatchlings in both houses as well as many fascinated BallenIsles' residents and guests. As of Friday, May 12, the Purple Martin house in the fitness (nature) park, had seven nests, 22 eggs, and 11 hatchlings, and the house next to the golf shop trailer had a full compliment of nests (12), 23 eggs, and 23 hatchlings. Typically in Florida, Purple Martins return from Brazil in mid-January to find a nesting site and begin building their nests; in mid-March they begin laying eggs. However, since this was the first nesting season for the BallenIsles Purple Martins, they did not begin nesting until early April. When the birds place a green leaf on the completed nest, egg laying is imminent. The female birds lay one egg per day at sunrise until they have laid from one to seven eggs. They do not skip a day. Incubation begins before

the last egg is laid and requires about 15 days. A month later, the nestlings fledge (start to fly). We expect most of the hatchlings to fledge by mid-June, and by early September adults and fledglings migrate to Brazil.

Purple Martins' diet consists of insects, which they eat "on the fly." Watching their aerial acrobatics as they soar through the sky is like seeing a choreographed ballet. They rely exclusively on humans to provide birdhouses for their nesting sites, dating back to Native Americans who hung hollowed gourds in trees for them. Purple Martins are always in the air or in or on the birdhouse, only landing briefly on the ground to gather nesting material. They drink by swooping into a nearby water source.

BIWF invites you to join us for a nest check every Friday at 4 p.m. next to the golf shop trailer and at approximately 4:30 p.m. at the nature park across from the gazebo. Many residents have come to watch us crank down the birdhouses and discover what's new in the nests each week; some took the photos included in this article. And can you believe it! Purple Martins don't mind our gentle curiosity.

April 28, 2017—Carl Feldman photos



April 28, 2017—Michael Wolov photos



May 5, 2017—Irina Enomaa photos



May 5, 2017—Michael Wolov photos



May 12, 2017—Sylvana Klein photos



Featured PETS

Bella and Kiki

In 2004 Cindy Krivosheiw, who lives in VintageIsle, rescued a Jack Russell terrier at her veterinarian's office. A young woman came into the office holding a puppy who she wanted to give away. The vet examined the puppy and gave her a clean bill of health, but once Cindy took her home, she and her husband Ron quickly realized that she was very sick; Cindy could put her ear to the puppy's chest and hear the rattles of what sounded like a severe respiratory infection. At one point, this poor little puppy even stopped breathing, but when Cindy gave her mouth to mouth resuscitation, she came back with her tail wagging. They named her Bella, and from that time on, she was Cindy's special girl. Needless to say, Cindy changed veterinarians, and after the new vet put her on antibiotics, Bella snapped right back to good health. Bella is a very sweet, shy little girl. When she developed epilepsy about 11 years ago, their wonderful veterinary neurologist, Dr. Blackmore, prescribed a medication that controls Bella's seizures. Bella loves to take her pills with a teaspoon of peanut butter. She is a senior citizen now but still jumps as high as Cindy's waist when she is excited, chases the hose when Cindy is watering her flowers, and barks at the landscaping crew.

Ten years later, in February 2014, Cindy and Ron adopted Kiki from A Second Chance Puppies and Kitten Rescue, who estimated her age at 6 to 8 months. Second Chance had rescued Kiki from a Louisiana animal control center that had picked her up as a stray. The bb that was found in her tail then is still there! It took Kiki several months before she trusted Cindy and Ron. She kept trying to run away but finally stopped when she realized that she was safe. A dog trainer friend suggested they have Kiki DNA tested. When they did, they found out that she is 1/2 Rat Terrier, 1/4 Fox Hound, and 1/4 Staffordshire Bull Terrier; so if you look at Kiki, you will see that she has Rat Terrier ears, the red coat of a Fox Hound, and Bull Dog feet! Kiki is full of curiosity and always busy. She loves to sit in the sun and chase lizards. Her best friend is



Bella



Kiki

Ballen, a white Maltese, who lives near them; when they play, Ballen almost always lets her win, and Kiki likes that—a lot. Kiki is the life of the Krivosheiw's heart. She is affectionate and cuddly, and best of all she loves Bella and Bella loves her.

Cindy and Ron feel so grateful to have rescued two wonderful unique dogs. In providing a safe loving home for their two rescue dogs, they created a space for two other homeless dogs to have an opportunity to be rescued and live long happy lives—just like Bella and Kiki.

Growing Green

Corky-stem Passion Vine (*Passiflora suberosa*)

by Jeff Nurge*

Among the *Passifloras* (passion flowers) that are native to Florida, the corky-stem is not as showy as our non-native varieties. However, it more than makes up its worth with its value to wildlife. The greenish flowers are only half an inch wide but give way to nice purple berries that are devoured by many bird species. These birds then disperse the seeds



throughout the yard, giving an abundant supply of vines year in and year out. The corky-stem vines blend into trees and bushes so much that they are hardly noticeable until the butterflies show up. Zebra Longwings, Julias, and Gulf Fritillaries butterflies will set up residence in your yard in order to stay close to this vine as it is one of their favorite host plants to lay eggs on. The neighbors will be baffled, wondering why you have butterflies in your yard and they don't!

Grow the corky-stem passion vine on a terrace or mix it in with your bushes. This fast growing vine also does well in hanging baskets. Corky-stem can be grown in full sun as well as shade. My plants are growing in a variety of light conditions, and they are all doing well. You'll find that different butterflies will prefer some vines solely on the basis of how much sun the vine gets, so vary your plant locations. Most soil conditions are fine but make sure they get enough water until they are established. After that they are very drought tolerant and require no supplemental watering. Those plants that come up in your yard from seed are on their own—Mother Nature will provide everything they need to thrive.

Corky-stem passion vine is available at native nurseries, including Meadow Beauty Nursery in Lake Worth. To find other nurseries that carry it, visit the association of Florida Native Nurseries at www.afnn.org, but don't stop there. The site provides only a snapshot of the offerings at local nurseries, so call around.

**Jeff is a Master Gardener, native plant expert, and owner of Native Choice Nursery (NativeChoiceNursery.com). After he converted his own yard to mostly native plant species, "the increase in number and variety of birds and butterfly species was dramatic." Visit his web site at FloridaNativeGardening.com*



To learn more about the BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation, visit our website at BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation.org and our Facebook page at facebook.com/BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation.

For additional information about BIWF, email us at info@ballenisleswildlifefoundation.org.



FLORIDA OWLS

by Judy Grace

The owls that live in Florida are our friends in one big way; Eating rodents and insects, they are our useful birds of prey. Their eyes so big, necks rotate around, Ears behind eyes help them hear every sound. By night, silent flight, they sneak up—that's their way Then regurgitate pellets with the remnants of their prey. There's an article in this issue about great horned owls, and so, Here's some information in poetry about other owls to know.

Screech owls are tiny—they're cute and often gray. They eat small animals and birds—quite a lot each day. Small burrowing owls make their homes in the ground. Hunt by night, but by day at their burrows are found. Barred owls help farmers as they find and eat voles, Save gardens from destruction, they play vital roles. Barn owls, so helpful, eat many mice a year. Look ghostlike while flying, but are nothing to fear.

Rodents and insects dare not to get near These Florida owls. But we're glad they're here!!!



Barn Owl



Barred Owl



Burrowing Owls



Screech Owl

MAGAZINE SCAVENGER HUNT

by Jackie Fabisch

I'll give the clues. You go on a scavenger hunt in the articles and photos to find the answers.

CLUES:

1. Bird that got its name because of the large tufts of hair that protrude from its ears.
2. Corky-stem passion vines attract these.
3. Dog who is wearing a sweater in a photo.
4. Organization that offers community service for 10–17 year old kids for fostering kittens.
5. Difference in the landscaping of BallenIsles as shown in the photos from 1995 and 2017.
6. Word that rhymes with WAY that refers to a type of bird.
7. Rescue facility whose initials are CFF.
8. Total number of whole and partial Purple Martins that can be seen in the photos of both birdhouses.
9. DNA test results for Kiki.
10. Photographer who took the picture of the owl on the front cover of this magazine.
11. Explanation of the acronym WANTS, which tells what plants need to thrive.
12. Color of the corky-stem passion vine flower in the photo.
13. Foundation that donated both Purple Martin birdhouses to BallenIsles.
14. Painting on the wall of the orange cat cottage in the photo.
15. Tell what is wrong with the photo of BallenIsles in 1995 that shows a convertible.

- ANSWERS:
1. Great Horned Owl
 2. Butterflies
 3. Bella
 4. Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League
 5. More trees and shrubs
 6. Birds of PREY
 7. Caring Fields Felines
 8. Thirteen
 9. ½ Rat Terrier, ¼ Fox Hound, ¼ Staffordshire Bull Terrier
 10. Jack Robbins
 11. Water, Air, Nutrition, Temperature, Sunlight
 12. Green
 13. BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation (BIWF)
 14. Cuban Green Anole (Lizard)
 15. Car going in wrong direction.