

With conservation victories so rare in Florida, I thought I'd share one from Miami where local activists [fought off a developer's plan for a water park](#) that would have imperiled endangered bats.

LINK: <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/miami-dade-commission-vote-miami-wilds-water-park/>

Meanwhile, [a pair of proposed mega-developments](#) – think thousands of homes, entire new cities, Nocatee-style – in southwest Florida in panther habitat would all, but prevent the species from ever growing its numbers past the 200 or so individuals it has been at for the past two decades if approved.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2023/12/14/sprawling-new-developments-obliterate-the-revival-of-florida-panthers/>

A Florida legislator has once again introduced a bill seeking to [ban the intentional release of balloons](#) in the state. Balloons which usually end up as trash in waterways or the ocean posing a risk to wildlife.

In 20 years, it will be unimaginable to people that this was a common practice, the way we now look back on releasing pigeons or doves to commemorate events.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2023/12/12/to-save-wildlife-florida-lawmakers-could-ban-the-intentional-release-of-balloons/>

The Florida Department of Transportation plans to spend nearly \$7 million [landscaping State Road 200 from I-95 to Amelia Island](#) in Nassau County. Native trees and plants feature heavily.

LINK: <https://fernandinaobserver.com/community/from-grim-to-attractive-on-a-stretch-of-sr200/>

[Eastern indigo snakes](#) were reintroduced to a Nature Conservancy preserve in the Panhandle seven years ago. For the first time, they have successfully reproduced.

LINK: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/florida/stories-in-florida/paradise-regained/>

North Florida Land Trust and its partners have been awarded \$15,243,902 by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Resources Conservation Service through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The funding will support the Corridor to Coast (C2C) initiative that extends through the Northeast and Central Florida region to the east coast and includes a "critical linkage" within the Florida Wildlife Corridor and Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN), the Ocala to Osceola (O2O) wildlife corridor.

The RCPP will support the conservation of working farms, forests and natural buffer lands that provide ecological benefits to the region.

The C2C is an extension of the O2O partnership led by NFLT and includes public and private organizations dedicated to landscape-scale conservation. The C2C is approximately 5,200,000 acres and covers portions of nine counties that include privately owned working lands and forests, freshwater wetlands, natural areas, pastures and public conservation lands.

The RCPP will increase funding for land protection and restoration in Baker, Clay and Putnam counties. It also adds new funding opportunities in Nassau, Duval, St. Johns and Flagler counties. The RCPP will bring

local, state and federal financial landowner assistance programs to private landowners for land management that protects natural resources and wildlife to further enhance regional conservation goals.

A recent episode of my “Welcome to Florida” podcast centered on [the Atlantic Goliath Grouper](#). The waters off Florida are the only remaining habitat these massive fish congregate in large numbers. Once nearly extinct, the fish made a dramatic comeback in the 90s and 00s, thanks to increased protection, but now Florida Fish and Wildlife wants to reintroduce a hunting season.

LINK: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1169570/14034699-episode-180-atlantic-goliath-grouper-lord-of-the-rocks>

Happy Holidays.

The next Conservation Newsletter will be in two weeks on January 7, 2024.