



FLORIDA

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Volunteer Boaters Needed for 25th Annual Fishing Line Cleanup

Abandoned and discarded fishing line ensnares local birds and marine mammals

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The 25th Annual Fishing Line Cleanup, organized by Tampa Bay Watch and Audubon Florida and sponsored by Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, will take place from Saturday, October 6 through Sunday, October 14. Audubon and Tampa Bay Watch desperately need volunteer boaters to help remove tangled fishing line from local mangroves and shorelines. Registration is required, and interested boaters can register at tampabaywatch.org. This cleanup, scheduled when most birds are not nesting, reduces the threat of entanglement for not only birds but other marine animals. Last year's cleanup resulted in an estimated 18,860 feet of fishing line being removed from 25 different coastal nesting sites around Tampa Bay.

Abandoned fishing line ensnares and kills thousands of birds every year. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologists have identified fishing line as the No. 1 killer of adult Brown Pelicans.

“Florida’s coastal birds face increasing pressures from habitat loss, human disturbance, and predation; removing fishing line is an easy way to increase their chances of survival,” said Audubon Florida Sanctuary Manager Mark Rachal. “Pelicans, egrets, herons and other iconic coastal birds need our help. We are asking for captains and crews to enlist in the 25th Annual Fishing Line Cleanup and make a difference for Tampa Bay’s wildlife.”

Registered volunteers receive cleanup locations, equipment list, and data sheets. Additionally, volunteers are instructed on how to free entangled live birds they may encounter during the cleanup and given information on local rescue groups that can assist. Visit tampabaywatch.org or call (727) 867-8166 x233 for more information on the event.

“It’s great to be able to get the community involved in an event to help prevent wildlife entanglements, while also raising awareness about the importance of responsible fishing practices. Ultimately, education and smart fishing will be the solution for this problem,” said Melinda Spall, Tampa Bay Watch Environmental Scientist.

Tampa Bay Watch is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) stewardship program dedicated exclusively to the charitable and scientific purpose of protecting and restoring the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary encompassing over 400 square miles of open water and 2,300 square miles of highly- developed watershed. Tampa Bay Watch involves more than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers each year in hands on habitat restoration projects. For more information, visit www.tampabaywatch.org, or call 727-867-8166.

Audubon Florida protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon works throughout the state using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Award-winning nature centers, chapters, and partners give Audubon an unparalleled wingspan that reaches thousands of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. A nonprofit conservation organization since 1905, Audubon believes in a world in which people and wildlife thrive.

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-Photo Opportunity- Media is welcome to join us at this event to get pictures of the Fishing Line Cleanup. Please contact Melinda Spall at 727.867.8166 x243 mispall@tampabaywatch.org or Mark Rachal at 813.623.6826 mrachal@audubon.org to schedule a time to get on the water with Tampa Bay Watch or Audubon Florida.