DU is securing permitting for a project to enhance 1,791 acres of wetlands on Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County. Two drainage systems and changes to hydrologic flows in the Loxahatchee River have shifted wetland vegetation, expanded exotic species and shifted diverse vegetation stands to monocultures. Wetland-dependent wildlife species have declined in the area. DU will enhance this prairie wetland system for waterfowl, wading birds, neotropical migrants and shorebirds. Water management infrastructure will restore this wetland system, aid in vegetation management and increase biodiversity. The project is part of DU’s Kissimmee to the Coast I NAWCA proposal.

FWC RECOGNIZED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADIAN WATERFOWL HABITAT

The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will be receiving the Silver Award in March highlighting their contributions to waterfowl and migratory bird conservation on the Canadian Prairies since 2003. This award will recognize FWC reaching $500,000 in cumulative giving to the State Grants program in FY19. Waterfowl band recovery data has clearly established that waterfowl produced and banded in Manitoba comprise a substantial proportion of the overall waterfowl population of the Atlantic Flyway. Data further supports that DU Canada’s conservation priority areas, supported by FWC funds, are a primary source for waterfowl harvested in Florida. The persistent loss of wetlands and natural upland cover combine to form a significant threat to the long-term productive capacity of the landscapes for waterfowl. It is DUC’s challenge to deliver programs that protect existing habitats, restore what has been lost, and develop new habitats that are compatible with the agricultural landscape of the prairie pothole region (PPR). The Manitoba PPR contains more than 500,000 wetlands, including more than 500 DU wetland projects. These projects are essential for breeding, staging and molting ducks and geese. FWC contributions provide the critical first dollar which lever additional funding that drives Canadian waterfowl habitat conservation.
**THIRD ANNUAL GREENWING HUNT**

DU’s Jacksonville Committee hosted around 35 youth hunters at Guana Wildlife Management Area during their third annual hunt. DU volunteer Trey Knight originally got this event approved through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and continues to be a huge part of its success every year.

Between local committee members, FWC staff and additional volunteers, nearly 100 people were on hand to enjoy breakfast and introduce these new hunters to waterfowling. While most hunters launched in the rain, it dried up before sunrise and didn’t start sprinkling again until after the post-hunt celebration ended. Quite a few youth hunters harvested ducks ranging from gadwalls to “blue bills” (scaup), and a few enjoyed the opportunity to harvest some coots. United Waterfowlers Florida co-sponsored the event, and one of the Jacksonville DU major sponsors provided underwriting for a youth model shotgun that was given away. All in all, it was a successful event, and every kid went home with a smile and a great memory. Next year’s hunt may include an overnight youth camp out if arrangements can be made.

**SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY - FLDU’S FIRST VARSITY CHAPTER**

Last year, we welcomed our first Varsity Chapter to FLDU. The Sarasota Military Academy established two chapters, one in their high school and one in the middle school. Sixty-four members joined the high school club while the middle school boasts 28 members. These young men and women are learning valuable conservation lessons as they participate in hunting, fishing, wood duck box construction and placement, and wildlife mapping and monitoring. We look forward to attending their first dinner fundraising event in May 2019.

Sargent Major Michael Collis and FLDU District 10 Chair Col. Bobby Lee Acomb have partnered to bring the outdoor experience to students at SMA who may not have had the opportunity to enjoy such before. Their leadership has meant deer, duck, and small game hunts for dozens of young Varsity members. And the plan is for this new chapter to partner with FWC and Myakka State Park to expand their wildlife programs.

**FLORIDA BY THE NUMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE</th>
<th>FWC’s cumulative contributions to DU for habitat conservation in Canada: $470,000.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2.17 million raised</td>
<td>29,456 acres conserved</td>
<td>(Information through 1/1/19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 events</td>
<td>$9 million invested</td>
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Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

Visit us online at www.ducks.org/florida