

## Managing a Golf Course in A Nature Preserve Is Topic of Featured Speaker at Annual Meeting March 26

**K**yle Sweet, Certified Golf Course Superintendent at The Sanctuary on Sanibel, will be the speaker at the annual meeting of The International Osprey Foundation on Sunday, March 26 at The Community House, Sanibel. Sweet will talk about maintaining a golf club in a nature preserve on Sanibel Island.

The course, designed by the nationally acclaimed golf course architect Arthur Hills, was

completed in 1992 and is a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. Bordering the world-renowned J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the course weaves and winds around nature preserves and lakes providing panoramic views of Southwest Florida's Pine Island Sound. Golfers often encounter the wide variety of birds and wildlife who call The Sanctuary home.

Sweet will describe how he strives to manage high-quality habitat and to cooperate with the refuge and will talk about the many creatures golfers encounter and how he accommodates both wildlife and humans.



Kyle Sweet

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and begins with a short business meeting. All are welcome to attend. A \$3 donation is requested of non-members.

## Bird Westall, TIOF Founder and Champion of Raptors, dies at 64



Bird Westall canoeing the Sanibel River

**B**ird Westall, founder and project director of The International Osprey Foundation and a former mayor of Sanibel, died on February 6, 2017, age 64, of complications from ALS.

"One of Sanibel's strongest environmental voices has left us," said Sanibel Mayor Kevin Ruane in a statement. "We all owe Mayor Westall a great debt of gratitude for the legacy of environmental stewardship and the legacy of habitat protection he left us."

photo by Andrew West/News-Press

Amy Bennett Williams, a writer with The News-Press in Fort Myers, offered insight into the Indiana-born environmentalist and champion of wildlife in an article reporting his death.

She wrote: "(His



Bird Westall

first name was actually Mark, but everyone called him Bird, and the nickname suited him in more ways than one.

"Not only was he long and gangly as a heron (and just as at-home in a mangrove tunnel) Westall was a passionate student of and advocate for feathered creatures."

"He spoke the osprey language," said writer Wayne Corbett of Sanibel.

Westall founded the nonprofit International Osprey Foundation in the early 80s and served on Lee County's Bald Eagle Technical Advisory Committee for more than a decade.

"Service was one of his core values, leading to three years on Sanibel's planning commission,

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## Ospreys Produced Fewer Chicks In 2016

**L**ast year, ospreys on Sanibel produced the lowest number of fledglings since 2007. A total of 54 chicks were produced compared with 72 in 2015. Two bald eaglets also survived. Six groups of nest watchers monitored a total of 119 natural and platform nests.

On Fort Myers Beach, 32 chicks fledged, down from 37 in 2015. In addition, eagles fledged two chicks on an abandoned osprey nest.

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Osprey at Lighthouse

photo by Ed Pelegrino

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## Bird Westall

eight on its city council, two terms as vice-mayor and one term as mayor, ending in 1993," Williams reported.

Mayor Ruane said major legislative accomplishments during Westall's

tenure include the establishment of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Conservation District, improving mangrove and wildlife habitat protection.

Westall made his living guiding canoe trips through Sanibel's J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge as well as the island's inland waterways, showing his guests the native

plants and animals he loved.

He'd been leading such trips since 1978, he wrote on his website, after coming to Sanibel "in search of Utopia," he wrote. "Of course, Utopia doesn't exist, but Sanibel comes close."

He studied anthropology and environmental studies at Indiana University.

Williams quoted Westall as saying, "Ever since I was a young teenager, I have been trying to understand why 'civilized' humans can be such jerks to everything else around them sometimes. I couldn't understand why a supposedly 'advanced' class of our species always seemed to be destroying everything they came in contact with instead of living in harmony with the surrounding environment ... When I first started this lifelong search for answers, I was focusing on the human aspect of the equation and began working on an Anthropology degree in college."

She wrote, "Westall could be prickly and bull-headed in service to his ideals, traits that sometimes cost him dearly. In his blog, he mused about natural systems and humans alike, and his frustrations with the latter, as he confessed in another post.

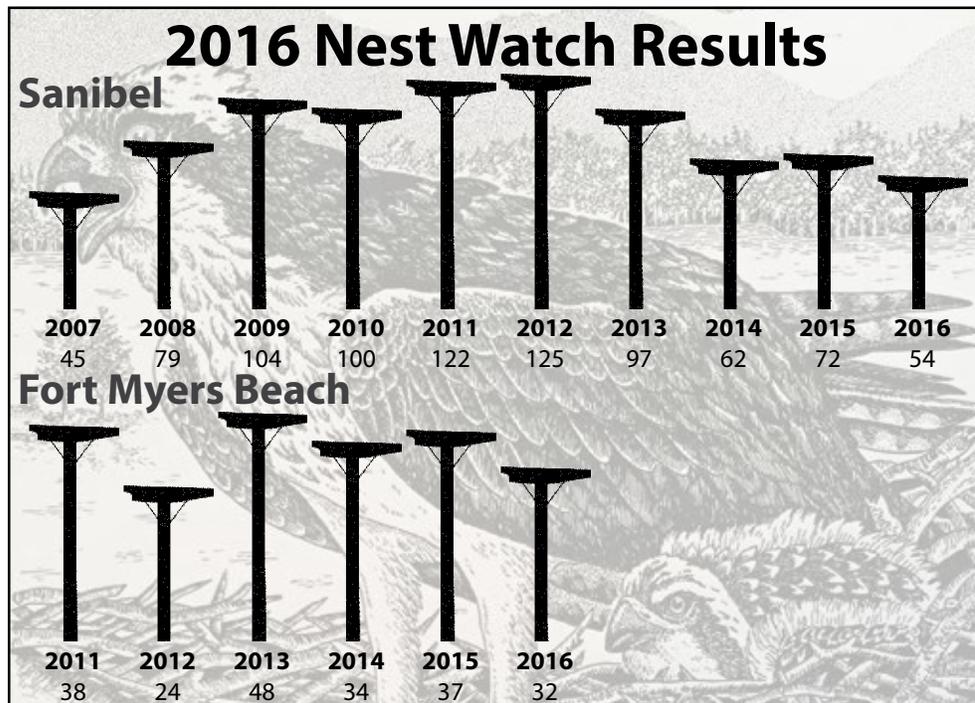
"For over 30 years I have worked to help the people of Sanibel to try to co-exist with the island's natural environment. And I believe that I have achieved a little success in that area, but I also feel that my success has not come without some major sacrifices. I'll admit that as young naturalist many years ago, I was naive in believing that all I had to do was talk logically to people about how they could co-exist with the natural world and, as a result, peace and harmony would be realized ... What was driving me crazy on Sanibel was I was constantly having to face off with those who claimed to have environmental desires, but they were not so sure they wanted the environment in their backyard!"

Williams continued, "Yet in the end, Westall returned again and again to that passion, sharing it one canoe-load at a time. It was more than his life's work: It was, as he wrote, his religion. "My Mother used to give me grief all the time because she said I didn't go to church enough. And my reply to her was, 'Mom, I go to church every day! It just doesn't have a roof over it like yours does.' No matter what beliefs you adhere to, I hope you ... join me in praying that our species will eventually, someday, respect all the wondrous things that are in the universe; both natural and human."

A memorial service for Bird was held on March 12 at Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.

## Also Sadly Missed

Carol Bugg Gardner, a staunch TIOF supporter and widow of Tim Gardner, former president of the foundation, died July 11, 2016 at the age of 73.



Osprey and chick in nest, drawing by Alessandro Troisi, Italy

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## Fewer Chicks

Nest monitors June Franklin and Sandy Ent report that of 27 nests they observed on Fort Myers Beach, three were abandoned and three were destroyed by wind.

The cause of the decline is unclear, but when Sanibel ospreys fledged only 45 chicks in 2007, the area was suffering water pollution problems.



This male osprey was eating the head and internal parts of a flounder before taking the remainder on to his mate sitting on eggs. "He is using the perch that Walt and I installed on our community oyster shell float," said Jack Spruill. "I think this represents good coastal marsh biodiversity - oysters, flounder and osprey, plus marsh grass and various creatures which live in the oyster rope habitats." The photo was taken on his hand-held iPhone through a spotting scope on 20 power magnification.

## Osprey Observations in North Carolina

TIOF member Jack Spruill of Hampstead, NC, sent us more of his photographs and observations of the ospreys in his area last summer's nesting season.



"With our monster high tide this evening this osprey perch pole is almost out of clearance for the osprey's tail. Two of our other perch poles are under water," noted Spruill.



Ospreys are adept at turning their catch into an aerodynamic position to avoid drag photo by Indreck Aavisto

# TIOF Grants For 2016

**Regan Dohm, University of Wisconsin, Madison** for continued support of masters thesis work on the long term impact on wind farm development on raptors - \$1,500.

**Pedro Lopez Suarez, Republic of Cape Verde**, to support efforts to reduce the predation losses of the ground nesting osprey population - \$1,500

**Rosiane Ariana Duarte Fortes**, a continued grant for further study of the osprey population, breeding parameters, foraging habitats, reproduction and phenology data on the island of San Nicolau, Cabo Verde - \$500.

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