

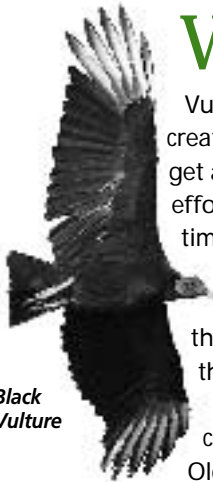
# habitat



News and Information from the Environmental Learning Center

January/February 2010

## Vultures By Rosemary Badger, Naturalist



**Black Vulture**

Vultures are amazing creatures, although they do get a bad rap. They can soar effortlessly for long periods of time. They are nature's clean up crew. They also have interesting adaptations that suit them perfectly to the life of a scavenger.

Worldwide, vultures are classified into two groups: Old World and New World.

In 1994, it was discovered that the New World vultures, which are our local species, share a common ancestor with storks and ibis. The 15 species of Old World vultures are in the same family as eagles and hawks. The two most common vultures found in the Americas, and the only two found in Florida, are the Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) and Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). Both are federally and state protected.

Vultures are of great value as scavengers. All species have featherless heads and necks which is an adaptation for their messy diet. Stomach acid allows them to safely digest rotting carcasses. Their urine is acidic enough to kill any bacteria on their legs that they pick up while eating. As urine runs down their legs it also acts as evaporative cooling.

The Turkey Vulture's head, like its namesake, is bald and red, whereas the Black Vulture has a bald, black head. The Turkey Vulture's stiff tail extends well beyond the feet in flight and helps them soar for hours without flapping. Black Vulture's tail extends

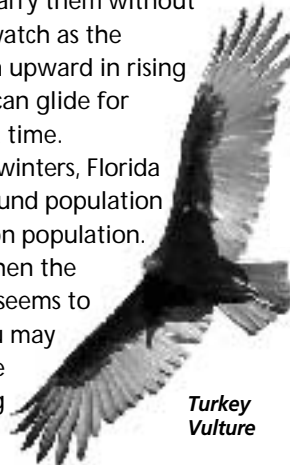
just to the end of the feet. The Turkey Vultures are one of the few birds that use their sense of smell to detect ethyl mercaptan, a gas produced by the beginnings of decay in dead animals. The Black Vulture has a weak sense of smell and finds food by sight, or by following Turkey Vultures and other scavengers.

Both species can be easily distinguished from each other as they fly overhead. The Turkey Vultures have dark brown wings with silver-whitish undersides and fly with their wings in a dihedral (V-shape, see photo). Black Vultures have black wings with white patches only at the end of the wings and fly with their wings in a flat line (see photo).

Vultures are social and prefer to roost in large colonies. They often roost overnight in trees, dead or alive, cell phone towers, rooftops and porches. They leave their evening roosts after the morning air has warmed. They spread their wings and use the rising warm air (thermals) to help carry them without flapping. You can watch as the thermals carry them upward in rising circles, where they can glide for nearly six hours at a time.

During our mild winters, Florida is home to a year round population as well as a migration population. This time of year when the vulture population seems to grow in Florida, you may wonder about these strange birds circling overhead.

Now you know!



**Turkey Vulture**

## EcoFest!

Sunday, March 7th  
12:00 - 4:00pm • FREE!

ELC's 14th Annual Open House  
Extravaganza

Held on ELC's 64-acre  
island campus

This year's theme:  
Our Own Backyard

Come discover that the best  
things in life can be found right  
in our own backyard!

Activity Booths, Live Animals,  
Canoe Excursions &  
Crafts for Young Children

Food Vendors

Shop in  
The Nature Nook gift shop

The River Rats band playing on  
the main stage all afternoon

**This year's EcoFest dedicated  
in memory of Billy Willer of  
The River Rats band**

Free Parking ~ Free Shuttle  
Park on the Wabasso Causeway

Winners of the Making a  
Difference in MY World School  
Contest will be announced  
on the main stage

EcoFest Co-Chairs:  
Tamara Garcia and Jan Garrison

Keep an eye on  
[www.DiscoverELC.org](http://www.DiscoverELC.org)  
for coming details

Unplug, Escape, Discover the ELC!

# ELC Inducts Seven New Board Members

By Thomas J. Spackman, M.D., ELC Board Vice Chairman

At its Annual Meeting on November 18, seven active Vero Beach residents were elected to the ELC Board of Trustees and introduced to some 50 past and present ELC founders, Board members, officers, and Environmental Learning Center Foundation Board members.

The event, a luncheon catered in the Quail Valley Boathouse, marked the 21st anniversary of the county's premier environmental education organization. Among others in attendance were Alma Lee Loy, founding capital campaign co-chairperson, Dr. Richard Baker, president of the Pelican Island Audubon Society which gave birth to the ELC, and County Commission Chairman Peter O'Bryan, a prior ELC Board member. Attending from the ELC founding Board when it was incorporated in 1988 were Thomas Lockwood and Gregory Smith.

ELC Board Chairperson, Eileen Connelly, served as master of ceremonies, introducing new trustees Debbie Berghorst, Doug Graybill,

Andrew Hartline, Susie Kasten, Marcia Littlejohn, Mollie Pratt and Emily Tremml. She presented mementos to outgoing Board member Wm. King Stubbs, M.D. and former Board Chairman Chuck Pollard.

**Outgoing Board member Chuck Pollard with Eileen Connelly, Chairperson of the Board**



**(left to right) Incoming Board Members Emily Tremml, Drew Hartline, Debbie Berghorst, Doug Graybill, Susie Kasten, Marcia Littlejohn, and Mollie Pratt.**

## ELC Board of Trustees

**CHAIRPERSON**  
Eileen M. Connelly

**VICE CHAIRPERSON**  
Thomas J. Spackman, M.D.

**SECRETARY ~** Tuny Hill

**TREASURER**  
Georgie S. Hutton

Debbie Berghorst  
Petra Blackman

Alice Cole  
Patricia Fava  
Todd Fennell

Doug Graybill  
Andrew Hartline

Barbara J. Holmén-  
McKenna

Susie Kasten  
Marcia Littlejohn  
Carl Miller  
Mollie Pratt  
Trevor Smith  
Emily Tremml  
Heidi Waxlax

George P. Bunnell  
(1924 - 2005)

## ELC Foundation Board

**CHAIRPERSON**  
Todd Fennell

**VICE CHAIRPERSON**  
Laura McDermott

**SECRETARY**  
Chuck Pollard

**TREASURER**  
Robert McCabe

Alice Cole  
John D. Lowenberg, Sr.  
James S. Mulholland, III  
Thomas J. Spackman, M.D.

**INVESTMENT COMMITTEE**  
**CHAIRPERSON**  
John D. Lowenberg, Sr.  
Alice Cole  
Todd Fennell  
Robert Prindiville  
Robert Puff



## Nightmare Benefits ELC Fire Fund

Omni Financial of Vero Beach and The Majestic 11 by Cinemaworld Theatre co-sponsored a fund raiser for ELC's Fire Fund Campaign. The Oct. 24 event featured a raffle and Halloween costume contest, followed by a showing of Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas in Disney Digital 3-D." Pictured at the check presentation (L-R) Chrissy Stephens and Tom Croom of the Omni Financial Charity Committee, ELC Board Chairperson Eileen Connelly and Alishia Colimon, General Manager of The Majestic 11. ELC is grateful to all who organized and participated in this event.

It's been an 11 year run. ELC's Bookkeeper, Maria Heffernan, is retiring from her part-time position. She's been much more than our bookkeeper; she's been our photographer, our bird lover, our funny story teller, our greatest shopper in The Nature Nook gift shop, our word-of-mouth promoter, our Spanish translator, and our great supporter. She is now a forever member of the ELC family. We are grateful for all of it, Maria. Now you go from ELC employee to ELC volunteer! See you soon.



ELC welcomes Mary Haaksma to our staff. Mary is our Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper. You might hear her cheery voice when you call our office. We're glad you've joined us, Mary!

Maria Heffernan



Tuny Hill, Laura McDermott, and Susie Kasten Golf Tournament Co-Chairs.

ELC is grateful to all who participated in the Dec. 4th wet & wild 17th Annual Charity Golf Tournament. We particularly want to recognize and thank the creative minds at the Bent Pine Golf Club led by Craig L. Waskow, General Manager and Pat Gorman, Golf Pro. We also extend appreciation to our Sponsors and Committee members.

## 17th Annual Golf Tournament Sponsors and Committee

**George E. Warren Corporation**  
*Grand Title Sponsor*

**Marquis Insurance**  
*Putting Contest Sponsor*

**Mr. & Mrs. Ted Berghorst**  
*Food & Beverage Sponsor*

**ADDITIONAL THANKS TO:**

Face Center of Vero (Dr. Donald Proctor, Jr.)  
Golf Round Up  
Kite Properties  
Rock City Gardens  
SST PURE  
Village Beach Market

**TEE SPONSORS**  
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Becker Irrigation  
The Cutting Edge  
DHI Advertising & Design  
George E. Warren Corporation  
Gold Coast Landscape Lighting  
Gould, Cooksey, Fennell, P.A.  
The Hill Group  
John's Island Real Estate  
The Lemon Tree  
The Robert F. & Eleonora W. McCabe Foundation  
Omni Financial  
Mr. Joe Pappalardo  
Pelican Pete Construction Co.  
The Press Journal  
Sawmill Ridge  
Ray & Beth Smith  
Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC  
**WINDSOR**

**HONORARY CHAIRMAN**  
Steve Lieberman

**GOLF COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS**  
Tuny Hill  
Susie Kasten  
Laura McDermott

**COMMITTEE**  
Debbie Berghorst  
Ted Berghorst  
Sherry Brown  
Alice Cole  
Toby Hill  
Alastair Kennedy, M.D.  
Marion Kennedy  
Rick McDermott  
Barbara Holmén-McKenna  
Sonny Nelson  
Dana Sakalas  
Romas Sakalas, M.D.  
Gene Simonsen  
Karen Simonsen  
Ba Stone  
David Stone  
Dace Stubbs  
Wm King Stubbs, M.D.



Julie Knight (right), owner of The Lazy Daisy, describes the Lilly Pulitzer collection to shopper Jody Brown.



ELC Board Member Alice Cole with Susan Perry of The Lazy Daisy.

On Dec. 8th, The Lazy Daisy introduced Lilly Pulitzer's Resort 2009 Collection with a special shopping day. The stunning and colorful collection is inspired by the ocean, its creatures, and the beauty that surrounds it. The Lazy Daisy (919 Azalea Lane in Vero Beach) donated 10% of the day's proceeds to the ELC to help fund our new seagrass and manatee exhibits.

